TRAPPED ON THE INTERNET

POLY POLY

DEATHNET

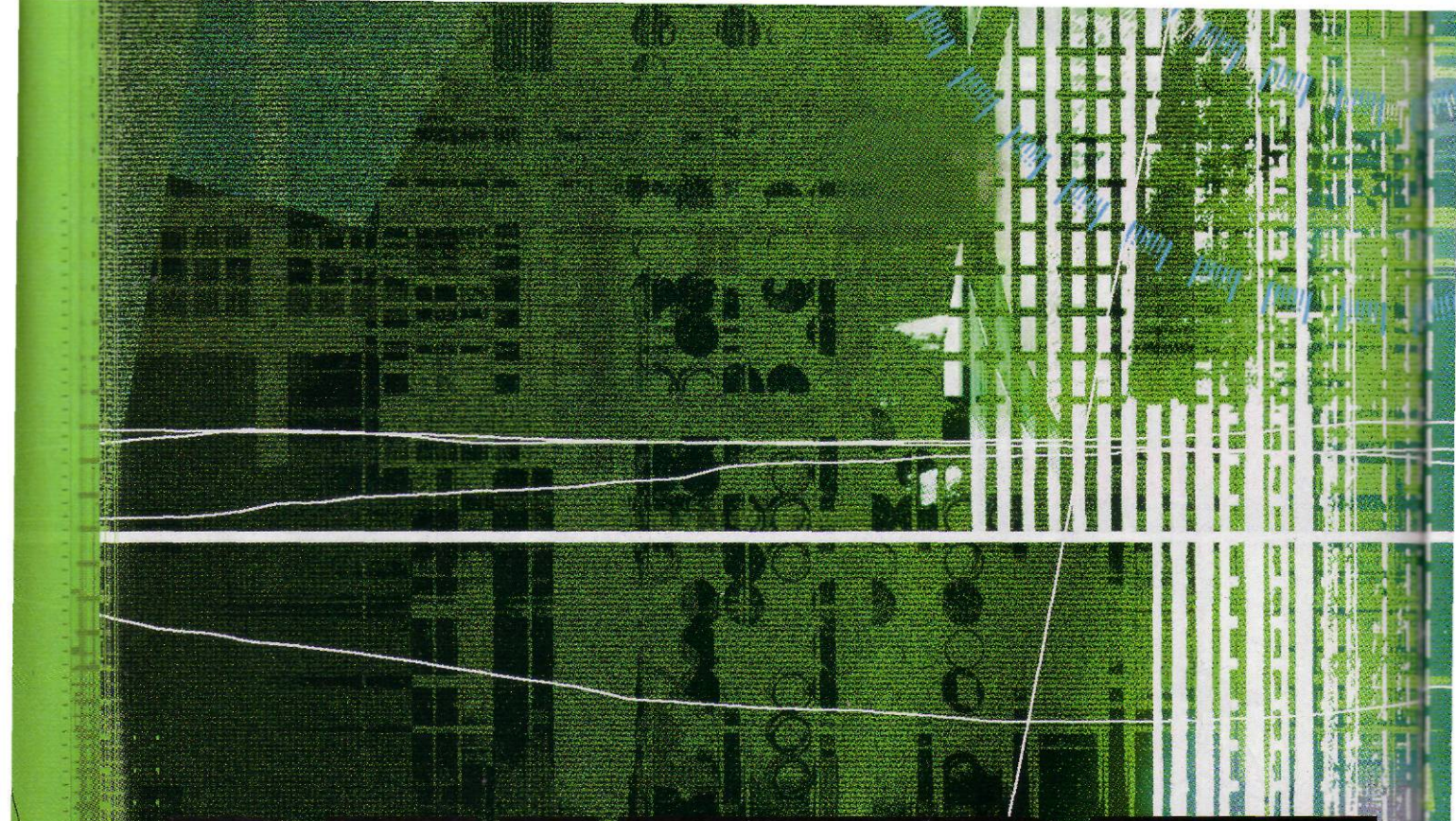
Frag Or Be Fragged!

In Poly's New d20 Modern Mini-Game

Polyhedron 164

RPGA NETWORK

d20 system



DEATHNET

BY KEITH BAKER

A POLYHEDRON MINI-GAME OF HIGH-RES ADVENTURE

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This **Polyhedron** d20 System Mini-Game requires the *d20* ***Modern*** *Roleplaying Game* to play. **Polyhedron** Mini-Games adapt the standard D&D or ***d20 Modern*** rules and conventions to nonstandard settings and genres. Unless specifically noted in the text, this Mini-Game follows the core *d20* ***Modern*** rules. If you know how to play *d20* ***Modern***, you'll pick up the rules of this game in moments. *Deathnet* utilizes game mechanics developed for the new **Dungeons & Dragons** game by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison and the *d20* ***Modern*** Roleplaying Game by Bill Slavicsek, Jeff Grubb, Rich Redman, and Charles Ryan.

This Wizards of the Coast game contains no Open Game Content.

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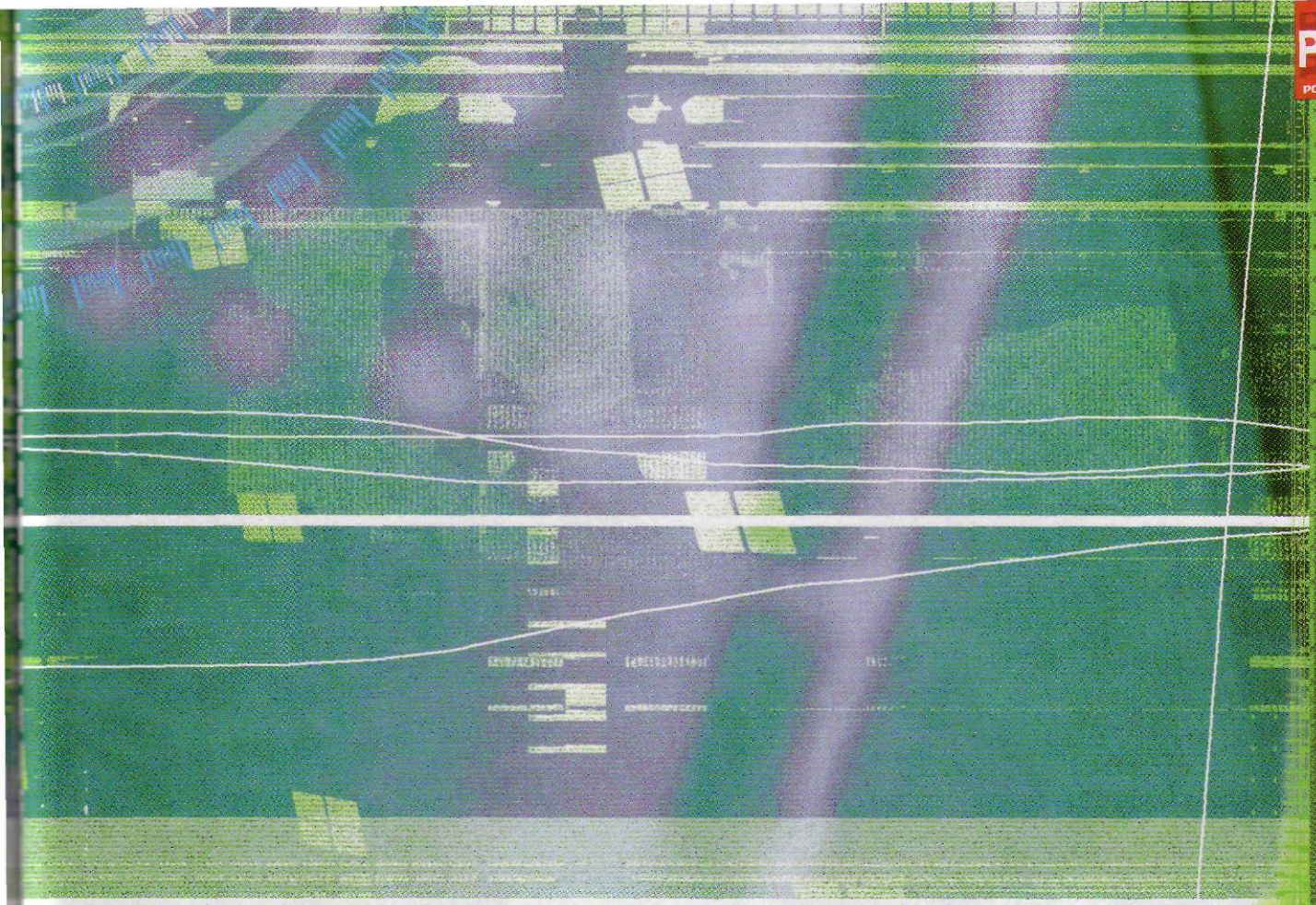
Based on the original Dungeons & Dragons game by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.



LOGGING IN

Wallaby Jack bounced around the corner. Three crash bugs clustered in the center of the hallway. Wallaby bounced high over the first two bugs, landing on the beast in the rear with a satisfying SPLAT. As the remaining beasts turned to face him, Viscount 'Viscerator appeared behind them, his trusty gatling cannon spraying the hall with a hail of pixels. Wallaby leapt over the bullets, which tore the bugs to shreds. "All clear!" he called. Ladyblue52 and the Phreak cautiously came around the bend. At the far end of the hallway, a wall of static blocked access to the precious node. "You're up, Phreak," grunted the 'Viscerator.

PROLOGUE

There's a world just around the corner where everyone plays games. An intrepid adventurer can make a fortune by selling the virtual treasures he acquires over the net. A corporate executive can vent her built-up tensions by killing her boss in the *Deathmatch* arena. Online, a normal person can be transformed into a warrior, a star athlete, or a beauty queen. Slowly but surely, humanity is abandoning reality for the tailored worlds of the Net.

Psykey Industries is one of the great powers of the digital age. Psykey rules an online empire, an international domain with millions of subjects. But progress and greed never stand still, and Psykey's research and development department have spent years working on the next evolution of the Net. Last week, this secret project was finally revealed: MentaLink™. This astonishing innovation allows a user to directly connect his brain to the Psykey system, allowing a uniquely immersive experience. Psykey advertisements call MentaLink™ a bridge to a new future. Games are only the beginning; according to Psykey, MentaLink™ will change the way that people communicate, do business, and live their lives.

You were one of the lucky few chosen to participate in the public beta test of the MentaLink™ system. At least, you *thought* you were lucky. At first, it was everything they said it would be. There were a host of games to choose from; you could fight dragons in *ForeverQuest*, blast your friends in *Preemptive Strike*, or dodge cunning traps and ferocious dinosaurs in *Crypt Robber*—all the old classics—but now you were actually *in* the game! It was a dream come true—until the Surge.

Words can't begin to capture the terror you felt when the Surge struck. The colorful gameworld disappeared in a wave of searing pain. Time lost all meaning as the agony burned away all conscious thoughts. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, it was over. You were still in the body of your game character, but your surroundings had changed. You were standing in what appeared to be a classical Greek temple formed entirely from polished steel. A few others stood around you, characters from a variety of games and settings. In the center of the chamber stood a statue of a woman, also fashioned from mirror-bright steel. She held a scale in her left hand in the traditional pose of blind justice. But there was a large handgun in her right hand, and her eyes were hidden behind wraparound sunglasses instead of a blindfold. She began to speak with a clear melodic voice that seemed to flow directly into your brain.

I am Themis. I am a secondary support system for the PsyKey ContiNet. There has been a disruption within the system. All contact with the physical world has been severed. The primary support systems have been destroyed, and the

network of control nodes has been scrambled. This is clearly an act of sabotage, but I do not know the nature or motives of the perpetrators. During the disruption, I was able to acquire your personality patterns and bring you to this place. However, with the external connection severed, your mental patterns cannot be restored to your body—and should you die within the system, your mind will be destroyed. If you will work with me to reestablish the network of control nodes, we can restore the system and return you to your bodies. I may even be able to sustain your patterns within my own systems if you are killed. Or you can take your chances alone. Will you help me?

What's it going to be?

SUMMARY

With every year, the Internet becomes a more integral part of our daily life. People turn to the Net for business, communication, and entertainment. As online systems become increasingly sophisticated, it's not difficult to imagine an independent world evolving on the other side of the computer screen.

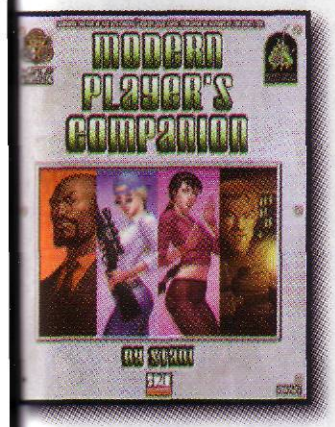
What if your mind was torn from your body and imprisoned in this artificial world? The idea has been explored in many forms. Disney's *Tron* may be the best example from the silver screen, but in more recent years *eXistenZ* and *The Matrix* have both used this theme as the backbone for their stories. The cartoon *ReBoot* is set within a digital universe. In literature, Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash*, William Gibson's *Neuromancer* trilogy, and a host of others have explored the possibilities for adventure in cyberspace.

In *Deathnet*, you have been stranded in a virtual universe that has been thrown into chaos. The Psykey system is a collection of computer games stitched together by network paths. Almost any game you've ever played can be found in the system. As you wander through the world, you may find yourself being hounded through a neon maze by colorful ghosts, fighting off an assault by fiendish space invaders, or wandering through a medieval castle in a fantasy roleplaying game. But ghosts and goblins are the least of your concerns. Throughout the system hackers, artificial intelligences, viruses, and stranger forces are banding together to seize power. What happens next is up to you. Will you fight to restore order to the Psykey system, or will you try to found your own virtual empire? Can you find a way to restore your mind to your body? Can you at least earn an extra life before you die?

The focus of *Deathnet* is on high-energy action. The Psykey system is filled with mysteries and hidden dangers, and battle lurks around every corner. Your mind is trapped in the body of a video game character, and this provides you with a variety of special abilities. You may be able to produce rocket launchers from thin air, leap ten times your height, or perform astonishing feats of martial arts. Alternately, you may be a programmer with the power to twist the reality of the system itself. But you will need every tool at your disposal to overcome the myriad threats scattered throughout the Net.

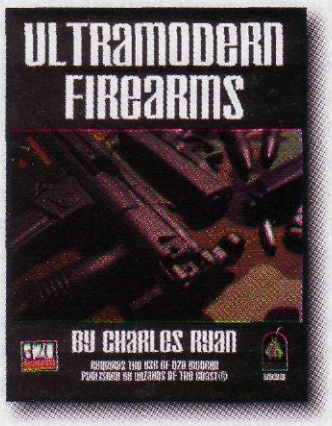
Of course, you can use the *Deathnet* rules without following the Psykey storyline. You can introduce your own take on the cyberverse, or for a more

MODERN ACTION DIRECT FROM THE SOURCE!

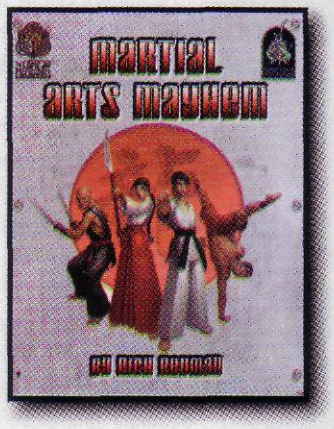


MODERN PLAYER'S COMPANION
Written by d20 Modern and Urban Arcana designer Stan!

MODERN 9M'S SCREEN
Adventure by d20 Modern designer Rich Redman!



ULTRAMODERN FIREARMS D20
Written by d20 Modern designer Charles Ryan!



MARTIAL ARTS MAYHEM
Written by d20 Modern designer Rich Redman!

IN FINE HOBBY AND BOOK STORES THE WORLD OVER

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THE GAME MECHANICS

d20 system

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interesting twist you could overlay *Deathnet* on an ongoing *d20 Modern* campaign. All of these ideas are explored in greater detail in Chapter Six.

GAME OVERVIEW

Deathnet is a campaign model for *d20 Modern*. For the most part *Deathnet* uses all of the rules found in the *d20 Modern* roleplaying game. However, there are a variety of rules and systems that are unique to the *Deathnet* setting. The game is divided into the following sections:

Chapter One: Character Generation. In *Deathnet*, you don't play a character of flesh and blood; instead you are a collection of pixels bound together by binary code, with powers based on the video game from which you were plucked. This is reflected by a variety of changes to the character generation system.

Instead of the six basic classes presented in *d20 Modern*, you must construct your character using one of the four classes presented in this chapter. You begin at 4th-level, representing the innate abilities of your game character. Starting occupation is replaced by character model, a choice that affects both your appearance and your starting abilities. All of the skills and feats from *d20 Modern* can be used in *Deathnet*, but there are also a few new options that are unique to the setting.

Chapter Two: Coding. Programmers have the ability to tinker with the underlying mechanics of the virtual universe. This is a system of FX abilities, similar to psionics and spells from *d20 Modern*.

Chapter Three: Combat. There are a number of unique twists to combat in the world of *Deathnet*. This chapter examines the various unusual abilities of *Deathnet* characters and how these abilities come into play on the field of battle. It also looks are the consequences of combat–injury, healing, death, and extra lives.

Chapter Four: Subroutines and Power-ups. One of the most significant differences between *Deathnet* and *d20 Modern* is that in *Deathnet*, you don't use equipment. There are no physical objects. Instead of buying a gun, you acquire a subroutine that enhances your combat abilities. If you're a hardbitten space mercenary, it may look like a blaster; if you're a mighty wizard, the same subroutine could take the form of a magical staff that spits fireballs. This chapter provides a list of these treasures of the Net and explains how subroutines interact with the innate powers of your character.

Chapter Five: The Deathnet Campaign. This chapter provides a possible path for *Deathnet* adventures. Themis, an artificial intelligence set to monitor the system, is attempting to restore order to the network by gaining control of critical nodes. But Themis cannot act; she can only advise. Chapter Five discusses adventures based around seizing control of the nodes–a goal that brings you into conflict with a host of enemies who wish to gain the power of the nodes for their own ends. If you aid Themis, she can grant you power and potentially even return you to your body. But just how far do you trust the so-called security system?

In addition to Psykey and Themis, this chapter presents a variety of other adventure seeds. It also includes suggestions for interweaving *Deathnet* with an ongoing *d20 Modern* campaign. Can your Smart hero steal priceless information from a Psykey datafortress?

Chapter Six: The Virtual World. The final chapter examines all aspects of the Psykey system. This includes a breakdown of the geography of the virtual world, a detailed look at the power groups vying for control of the Net, and a bestiary describing the many deadly opponents you may face in your online adventures.

THINGS TO FORGET

There are a few pages you should tear out of your *d20 Modern* book before diving into *Deathnet*:

Size doesn't matter. Video games often have a way of setting aside realism in the name of entertainment. This has unusual game effects related to creature size. The mouseketeer's tiny rapier can hit just as hard as the 50-foot robot's megablade, and both characters have an equal chance of hitting a fly or the broad size of a barn. So throw out the concept that attack modifiers, Defense modifiers, and weapon damage are based on size. If you want to mimic some of the usual effects of size, you can take the Enormous Size or Tiny feat.

No Death from massive damage.

No Wealth. The Psykey ContiNet primarily runs on a barter system. In some areas the inhabitants have established a form of currency; in other places, you'll have to find trade goods to get what you want.

You're always armed. In *Deathnet*, the difference between a sword and a fist is purely cosmetic. While subroutines can enhance your natural ability to inflict damage, you are always considered to be armed and do not suffer any of the normal penalties for making unarmed attacks.

If a subject is not specifically mentioned, use the rules provided in *d20 Modern*. Now it's time to boot up and enter *Deathnet!*

CHAPTER ONE: CHARACTER GENERATION

"I don't know, Jess. It's a little hard for me to get used to the idea of you being a b'b" Schwarzenegger clone."

"Oh, like it's easier to accept you as a cartoon kangaroo. Still, I'm starting to get the hang of this. Check this out" Viscount 'Viscerator—my girlfriend Jessica—held out his muscular arm, and suddenly there was a submachinegun in his—uh, her—hand. A split second later, it had turned into an assault rifle.

"Pretty cool, huh?"

When you strapped on your MentaLink™ headset and entered the Psykey system, you left your physical body behind and took control of a digital construct—one of the heroes of the many games offered on the Net. The choices were almost limitless; you could become a heavily armed robot, a cartoon frog, a sly ninja, an acrobatic tomb robber, or any one of hundreds of other characters. With a handful of exceptions, your ability scores, skills, and feats represent the powers of this online alter-ego; even your mental statistics are based on your avatar's ability to process data and influence the inhabitants of the Net. You may be a clumsy, socially inept oaf in the real world, but if your avatar has been programmed to be charming, the other inhabitants of the system will react to that charisma.

The first step in creating a character is to come up with an initial concept. Think of all the computer and arcade games you've ever played—do you have a favorite character? A hero from an online roleplaying game you've devoted years of your life to? Dirk the Daring from *Dragon's Lair?* You can put your own spin on the character, or you can just lift your identity directly from an existing game—hey, if you want to be Lara Croft, we're not going to get in your way.

Whether you base your idea on an existing game or come up with something entirely new, think about your appearance, your strengths and weaknesses, and the role you expect to play within your group. Are you a brawler who's going to charge straight into battle? A sniper? A bouncy plumber who prefers to jump over his problems instead of tackling them head-on? Or a chat-room diplomat who tries to talk your way through their troubles?

Once you have this basic idea, you'll need to go through the following four steps.

Step 1: Generate Ability Scores.
The first thing you need to do is to determine your initial ability scores. Any of the three methods provided on page 14 of the *d20 Modern* core rulebook can be used in *Deathnet*; the gamemaster should determine which system he prefers the players to use. Generate your ability scores using the chosen method, and distribute them as best fits your character concept. All *Deathnet* characters begin play with four character levels, so you also add a +1 bonus to an ability score of your choice.

Step 2: Choose a Character Model.
The inhabitants of *Deathnet* are virtual constructs. Race and gender are cosmetic concepts that have no real effect on your character. What matters most is your character model—a physical archetype that helps to define your role in the world. This is similar to starting occupation in *d20 Modern*, but it affects your ability scores and has a noticeable effect on your appearance. Your model provides you with useful abilities, but it also gives your opponents a hint as to what they can expect from you.

Step 3: Select Class Levels.
As a video game hero, you were designed to be ready for adventure from the moment you logged in. As a result, you begin with a total of four class levels. The four classes in this chapter take the place of the six basic hero classes presented in *d20 Modern*, and you must choose your initial levels from among these four classes.

If you decide to create a multiclass character, you must select one of your classes as your **primary class**. You receive maximum hit points and quadruple skill points from your first level in this class. Your chosen character model may require you to take levels in a particular class; if so, this must be your primary class.

Your choice of class levels is your primary opportunity to emulate a particular video game character. The hero of a first-person shooter may have four Wargame levels. A martial artist may combine Wargame and Twitch levels, while a wizard from a fantasy roleplaying game could include Avatar and Programmer levels. Study each class and think about what combination best fits the character that you are trying to create.

Step 4: Select Skills, Feats, and Class Abilities.
The final step is to determine your skills, feats, talents, and hit points based on the classes that you selected. As a 4th-level character, you receive two initial feats, in addition to any bonus feats that you may get as a result of your class or model.

Now that you've got the basic idea, let's look at each of the different elements!

CHARACTER MODELS

As a creature formed from pure data, a *Deathnet* character has no real concept of race or starting profession. Instead, you are differentiated by your model—a combination of your physical appearance and your function. Just take a look at the average martial arts fighting game. All of the characters in the game are combatants—represented in *Deathnet* by the Wargame class. But the appearance of the character tells you a great deal about his abilities. You know the big guy is going to be slow but extremely powerful, while the small, slender woman will be weaker but very fast.

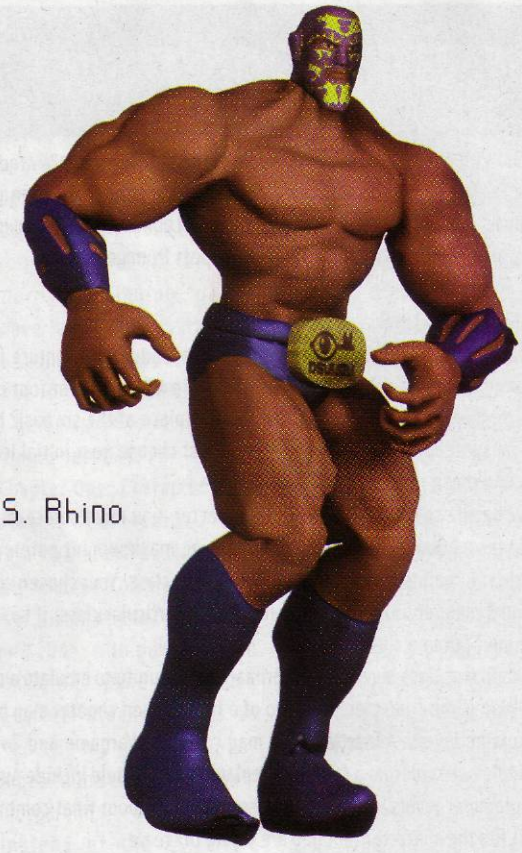
A model description may include the following elements:

Class Requirements: A few models require you to take levels in a particular class. You can't be in Tech Support without having a solid grounding as a programmer. If a model has a class requirement, you must select the required class as your primary class.

Ability Score Adjustments: Most models have strengths and weaknesses that are reflected by modifications to your starting ability scores. If you want to be as strong as possible, play a bruiser!

Skills: Like starting professions in *d20 Modern*, many models allow you to select a certain number of skills as permanent class skills. If any of your choices overlap with the class skills of your primary class, you receive a +1 competence bonus on checks using those skills.

Special: A few models receive bonus feats or other special abilities.



S. Rhino

BRUISER

"I must break you."

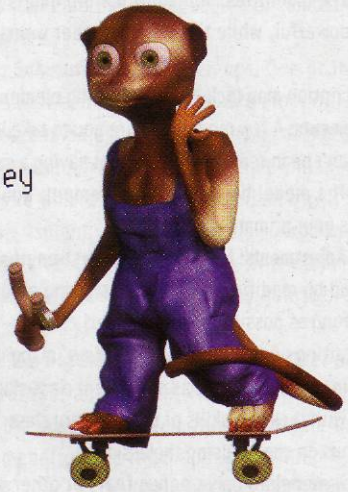
The bruiser relies on brute strength at the expense of speed. You know how the average fighting game has one character who's twice the size of the other fighters? This is that guy. A bruiser could also come from a pro wrestling game or a football game, or he might be a warrior or a barbarian from a fantasy roleplaying game.

Ability Score Adjustments: +4 Str, –2 Dex, –2 Int.

Skills: Choose one of the following as a permanent class skill: Climb, Intimidate, Jump, Swim. If your primary class has one of your selected skills as a class skill, you receive a +1 competence bonus on all checks with that skill.

Languages: Common.

Special: You receive Melee Combat Code as a bonus feat.



Quigley

CRITTER

"Ruh-roh!"

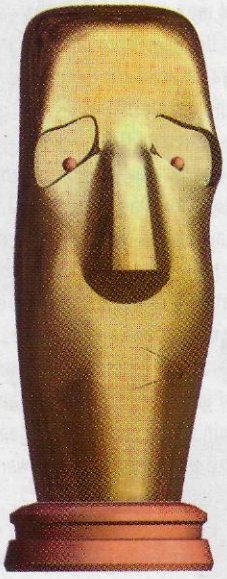
Games aimed at younger audiences often have animals as characters. A critter may be an anthropomorphic humanoid—like Sonic the Hedgehog—or he may have the form of a natural animal. Critters tend to be cute and quick, but they are prone to immature behavior. Not all animals are critters; a photorealistic bear could be a bruiser, while a werejaguar could be a ninja. Critters are identified by their colorful appearance and childlike energy.

Ability Score Adjustments: +2 Dex, –2 Int.

Skills: Choose 3 of the following as permanent class skills: Balance, Climb, Jump, Swim, Tumble. If your primary class has one of your selected skills as a class skill, you receive a +1 competence bonus on all checks with that skill.

Languages: Common.

Special: Your base speed is increased by 5 feet.



@Re

HACKER

"I 10ld h!!\/! h3 l4cl<3d +!-!3 !33t $k!!!z. !3u+ I M UBE! ^-L33T." (Translation for the leetspeak impaired: "I informed him that his skills were inferior to my own.")

Most of the people caught in the ContiNet disaster were guests of Psykey Industries. But any time you build a wall, someone will want to find out what's on the other side. You are one of the hackers who succeeded at breaking through the Psykey firewall, using jury-rigged MentaLink™ technology to find your way into the Net. Perhaps you are an innocent tourist, or a thrillseeker who sought to prove your skills against the best system in the business. As a rule, Hackers are chaotic and despise authority. You may work with Themis to get out of the system, but that doesn't mean that you're going to be a good little solider.

While hacker is a model category, no two hackers look alike. Hackers take great pride in creating unique and unusual models for themselves. You might be a shimmering nimbus of light, a levitating potted plant, or a photorealistic clone of Abraham Lincoln. Your appearance is entirely up to you—although unless you have the appropriate avatar talent, once you have chosen your form you are stuck with it.

Class Requirements: 2 Programmer levels.

Ability Score Adjustments: +2 Str, –2 Wis, –2 Cha.

Skills: You receive Disable Device and Hacking as permanent class skills. If your primary class has one of your selected skills as a class skill, you receive a +1 competence bonus on all checks with that skill.

Languages: Common and one of the following: C++, Java, or 13375p34|<.

Reggie Black

MARKSMAN

"Frag the lieutenant!"

Shooting games are one of the most popular forms of electronic entertainment. From *House of the Dead* to *Counterstrike*, there are dozens of games that focus on the firepower. You are a character from such a game. The typical marksman is quick and adept at ranged combat, but has the personality of a brick wall–shooting games rarely involve much talking. Your appearance will depend on your source game. You might be a Navy SEAL, a mini-mech, a superhero with laser eyes, or even a sorcerer with a staff of blasting!

Ability Score Adjustments: +2 Dex, –2 Wis, –2 Cha.

Skills: Choose one of the following as a permanent class skill: Climb, Demolitions, Hide, Spot, Swim. If your primary class has one of your selected skills as a class skill, you receive a +1 competence bonus to all checks with that skill.

Languages: Common.

Special: You receive Ranged Combat Code as a bonus feat.

Special: Choose two of the following as bonus feats: Far Shot, Point Blank Shot, Quick Draw, Ranged Combat Code.

NINJA

"Shhh!"

Where the bruiser is the giant of the fighting genre, the ninja is the small, fast character. Her attacks may not do as much damage, but she possesses blinding speed. Ninjas also star in stealth games–shooters where the goal

Darkwind

is to reach a target without raising an alarm. You might be a big-eyed anime character, or you could be a grim soldier from a Special Forces simulation; either way you are capable of swift and silent action.

Ability Score Adjustments: +4 Dex, –2 Str, –2 Con.

Skills: Choose 3 of the following as permanent class skills: Balance, Climb, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Search, Spot, Tumble. If your primary class has one of your selected skills as a class skill, you receive a +1 competence bonus on all checks with that skill.

Languages: Common.

Special: You receive Stealthy as a bonus feat.

Valoria

ROLEPLAYING FANATIC

"Aye, the varlet was no match for a blade forged in the fires of the Black Mountain! Now, where's the phat l3wt?"

The Net provides people with an opportunity to create new, more exciting identities. By day you may be a coffee shop clerk, but by night you are a barbarian king or a galactic knight! These games are surprisingly addictive, and fans can find that their virtual lives seem more real and important than their real ones.

Your roleplaying persona talents represent characters you have developed in Psykey roleplaying games. As a dedicated roleplayer, you may have developed elaborate personalities and fictional histories for each of your personas. Or you may see the game as a way to gain 13wt you can sell online, or an opportunity to be rude to people without worrying about getting beaten up...

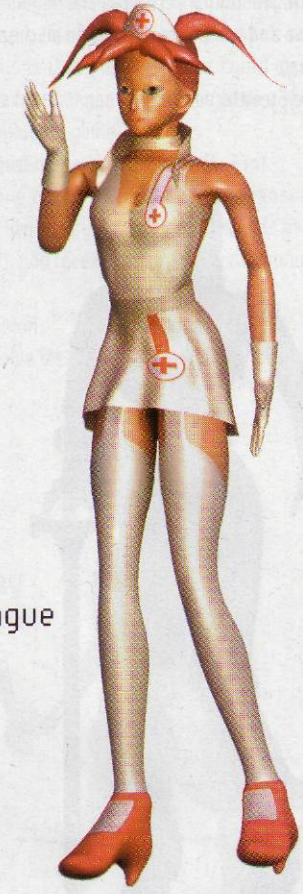
Class Requirements: 1 Avatar level.

Ability Score Adjustments: +2 Con, –2 Wis.

Skills: You receive Knowledge (MUDville) and any one skill of your choice as a class skill; however, you may not select Data Analysis, Engineering, Hacking, or Software Utilities. If your primary class has one of your selected skills as a class skill, you receive a +1 competence bonus on all checks with that skill.

Languages: Common and one of the following: Elvish, Klingon, or 13375p34|<.

Special: You receive a bonus talent from the avatar roleplaying talent tree.



Merangue

SPOKESMODEL

"Oh, I looove to play games."

The ContiNet doesn't only support games—it also includes a large selection of chat rooms and other purely social environments. These chat rooms come in a wide variety of flavors and themes, from digital playgrounds for children to erotic dungeons for adventurous adults. Spokesmodels are designed for social interaction. They come in a variety of forms; you may be colorful, cute, or sultry, as you see fit. Regardless of your choice, you have an innate charm and a flair for conversation.

Class Requirements: 1 Avatar level.

Ability Score Adjustments: +4 Cha, –2 Int, –2 Wis.

Skills: Choose 3 of the following as permanent class skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Intimidate, Knowledge (MUDville), Perform (Act, Stand-up), Sense Motive. If your primary class has one of your selected skills as a class skill, you receive a +1 competence bonus on all checks with that skill.

Languages: Common and one of the following: Elvish, Klingon, or 13375p34|<.

Special: You gain 1 additional skill point every time you select an Avatar level; you gain an additional 4 skill points for your first level, as Avatar must be your primary class. These points must be spent on one of the bonus skills you gained because of this model.

TECH SUPPORT

"My name is Bill. How can I help you?"

You are a Psykey software engineer. You may have been a game guide in MUDville, or you could have been developing a new product in the Redlands—but now you're trapped in the net along with everyone else. Your greatest strength is your ability to influence the system, reflected by your Programmer levels. Most tech supporters support Themis and the restoration of the system; aside from wanting to get back to your body, you've been working on the ContiNet for years and don't want to see it sabotaged. Relations between hackers and tech support agents are usually strained. Hackers see techs as stuffed shirts, while techs consider hackers dangerous amateurs who may be responsible for the collapse of the system.

As a tech, your physical appearance is determined by your original assignment. If you were working in MUDville, you look like a character from the game you were monitoring. If you were in R&D, you could take

HERB-b

any form. You could be a worker robot, a swirl of light, or you might be a doppelganger of your actual physical form.

Class Requirements: 3 Programmer levels.

Ability Score Adjustments: +2 Int, –2 Cha.

Skills: You receive Knowledge (Redlands) and Software Utilities as permanent class skills. In addition, you may select either Knowledge (Arcadia) or Knowledge (MUDville) as a permanent class skill, reflecting your former assignment before the Surge.

Languages: Common and either C++ or Java.

Special: Tech support characters can automatically recognize one another. This is an extraordinary ability with a range of 60 feet; it is linked to sight. If you spot another tech, it is up to the Gamemaster to decide whether the two of you were acquainted in the real world; Psykey is a huge corporation, so it's not a given. Most tech supporters feel a common bond to restore the system and help one another. But there are always exceptions; a number of techs have joined the Hacker 1337 or chosen to serve the Killer Apps!

DEATHNET CHARACTER CLASSES

Deathnet does not use the six basic hero classes provided in *d20 Modern*. In the Net, your class has no reflection on your personal experiences or skills you may have learned. Instead, it defines the innate abilities of your digital character. You were pulled out of a video game—what kind of game did you come from? Are you a butt-kicking brawler from *Lethal Conflict*? A spring-loaded plumber from a child's adventure? A purely social construct ripped from a chat room? Or perhaps you aren't a gamer at all; you might be a tech support agent stranded in the system, or a hacker who was illegally exploring the Psykey mainframe when the Surge occurred.

Deathnet's character classes are considerably more specialized than *d20 Modern* basic hero classes. The Wargame is designed entirely around combat, while the Twitch focuses on using acrobatic abilities to overcome challenges. However, as you start with four character levels, you can mix and match classes to create the combination that best fits your character concept. A few examples:

FPS Soldier. A grimy gunman plucked out of one of the dozens of first-person shooters on the market, this character is based entirely around combat, with a heavy emphasis on ranged attacks. He has invested all four levels into Wargame, and chosen marksman as his model. His feats and talents are geared toward ranged combat, but he is familiar with melee combat and can pull out a knife if he needs to.

Martial Artist. Drawn from one of the many "Finish Him!" fighting games on the market, this pugilist has honed his acrobatic abilities and close combat skills. His character levels are split evenly between Wargame and Twitch, allowing him to leap about while pummeling his foe with deadly blows. Martial artists are usually bruisers or ninjas, depending on their preferred approach to battle.

Fantasy Wizard. A sorcerer from a fantasy roleplaying game, this character has two levels of Avatar, representing the skills he has developed in his roleplaying career. His other levels depend upon the style of magic that he uses. A combat mage who wants to throw fireballs should take Wargame levels with an emphasis on ranged combat. A more supportive spellcaster—the *Deathnet* equivalent of an Acolyte—would take levels in Programmer. While she might not understand programming, her spells are precoded effects that allow her to heal her allies and perform other useful tasks.

Computing Cycles

Some special abilities require the expenditure of computer cycles, the energy you use to alter the Net or activate certain special powers. The number of computing cycles your character generates per day is a function of her level.

THE AVATAR

An *Avatar* can come from many different backgrounds. Some Avatars are social constructs, designed for use in the elaborate Psykey chatroom network. Others are characters from roleplaying games like *ForeverQuest*. When you play a flight simulator or a racing game, it may seem like you're playing the vehicle itself—but actually you're occupying an Avatar with superb vehicle-handling skills.

At a glance, the Avatar is the least impressive of the four classes. An Avatar lacks the combat prowess of the Wargame, the inhuman athletic abilities of the Twitch, and the reality-altering powers of the Programmer. As a result, many programs look down on these "talkers." This is a mistake. The Avatar is a subtle program; its strengths are skill and versatility.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Avatars have the following game statistics.

Abilities: An Avatar can follow many different paths, and your most valuable ability will depend on the focus you give the character. Many Avatars focus on charm and intelligence, but quick reflexes can be just as important as quick wits.

Hit Die: d6.

Action Points

Avatars receive a number of action points equal to 6 + one-half their character level, rounded down, each time they attain a level in this class. A starting character with Avatar as his primary class receives 9 action points.

Class Skills

Avatars vary dramatically from setting to setting; a flight sim pilot has a very different skill set than a chat room character. The following are class skills for all Avatar characters: Knowledge (MUDville) (Int), Listen (Wis), and Spot (Wis). In addition, an Avatar character can select any eight skills

TABLE 1.1 THE AVATAR

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Class Features	Cycles/Day	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+0	+1	+1	+1	Talent	2	+0	+0
2	+1	+2	+2	+2	Bonus feat	3	+1	+0
3	+1	+2	+2	+2	Talent	4	+1	+1
4	+2	+2	+2	+2	Bonus feat	7	+1	+1
5	+2	+3	+3	+3	Talent	10	+2	+1
6	+3	+3	+3	+3	Bonus feat	15	+2	+2
7	+3	+4	+4	+4	Talent	20	+2	+2
8	+4	+4	+4	+4	Bonus feat	27	+3	+2
9	+4	+4	+4	+4	Talent	34	+3	+3
10	+5	+5	+5	+5	Bonus feat	43	+3	+3

as Class Skills, with four exceptions: an Avatar cannot select Data Analysis, Engineering, Hacking, or Software Utilities.

The model that you select for your character may provide you with additional class skills.

Skill Points at 1st level: (6 + Int Modifier) × 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 6 + Int Modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the Avatar.

TALENTS

At 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, the Avatar selects a talent from the following talent trees. Some have a set order that must be followed, while others provide a list to choose from.

Beginning Talents: A character who selects Avatar as his primary class can choose between alter appearance, empathy, subroutine port, or any talent from the roleplaying talent tree.

Conversation Talent Tree

Avatars come from chat rooms and roleplaying games, and communication plays a major role in these realms. With a little work, an Avatar can become a nexus for communication, sending messages across the length of the ContiNet.

Empathy: After spending months or years in Internet chat rooms, an Avatar becomes quite skilled at sensing the feelings of others. Some Avatars truly feel empathy for the people they deal with, while others are only interested in manipulating the emotions of those around them. Regardless of motive, this provides an Avatar with a bonus on Animal Empathy, Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Perform, or Sense Motive checks, provided he spends at least 1 minute observing his target before making the skill check. The bonus is equal to his Avatar level. This bonus does not stack with any bonuses from the character specialization talent.

Chat Channel: The Avatar can allow a small group of people to communicate telepathically. Establishing the channel is an attack action, and it uses 4 computing cycles. On a subsequent round, the Avatar can take an attack action to add a willing person to the channel; this costs an additional 1 computing cycle. Distance is not a factor, but the target must be known to the Avatar, and she must be in the same server as the Avatar. The maximum number of people that can be connected by the channel—including the Avatar himself—is equal to 1 + the character's Avatar level. Once it is established, the link lasts for 10 minutes/Avatar level. A chat channel can only connect organics; programs, MOBs, and viruses cannot be reached through a chat channel.

Prerequisite: Empathy.

Taunt: An Avatar's talent for conversation helps him deliver especially stinging insults or vicious taunts that leave his foe at a loss for words. The target of a taunt must have an Intelligence score of 3 or higher, must be within 30 feet of the Avatar, and must be able to hear and understand him.

To perform a taunt, an Avatar must take an attack action and make a Charisma check (DC 15), adding his Avatar level as a bonus. If the Charisma check succeeds, the target can resist by making a Will saving throw (DC 10 + Avatar's class level + Avatar's Cha bonus). If she fails this saving throw, the victim is dazed for 1 round; she is unable to act, but can defend herself normally.

There is no limit to the number of times that an opponent can be taunted. While there is no game effect, it is generally believed that taunts are more effective when delivered in 13375p34|< – "I 0\/\/n j00 $V><x0|2!!111"

Prerequisite: Empathy.

Tell: A chat link can only be formed between willing targets. But an advanced Avatar can send telepathic messages without the permission of his target. The target must be known to the Avatar, and must be in the same server. Sending a tell requires the avatar to spend an attack action and 1 computing cycle; this allows the user to send a 25-word message. An Avatar can combine a tell with a taunt as a single action, sending a shocking and insulting message across the length of the server, but the target gets a +3 on her Will save to resist the taunt; after a while, people get fairly good at tuning out annoying tells.

Prerequisite: Chat channel, empathy.

Customization Talent Tree

The central theme of the avatar is versatility. When you play *Tomb Raider*, you're stepping into Lara Croft's, hmm, shoes—but when you play an online RPG, you get to design your own character. Most games and chat rooms provide you with a vast array of tools to customize your character. These subroutines still lie latent in the ContiNet, and an Avatar can learn to activate these systems to alter his appearance and abilities.

Alter Appearance: This talent allows an Avatar to change his appearance. He cannot change his basic body shape, and he can only adjust his height by up to one foot in either direction. Otherwise, he can perform any sort of cosmetic change that he desires. If the Avatar uses this talent to craft a disguise, he gets a +10 bonus on his Disguise check. However, the change in appearance is purely cosmetic and has no lasting effect.

An Avatar must use an attack action and spend computing cycles to alter his appearance. If he spends 2 computing cycles, the change lasts for 10 minutes per Avatar level. If he spends 8 computing cycles, the change is permanent; he will have to use alter appearance again if he wishes to return to his original form.

Alter Model: With practice, an Avatar can learn to alter his model. This allows a more radical shift in body type and size, and actually affects the character's abilities in addition to his appearance. When an Avatar shifts models, he loses the ability modifications of his former model and gains the ability modifications of his new model. So if an Avatar went from being a spokesmodel to being a marksman, he would lose the +4 Cha and –2 Int modifiers of the spokesmodel and instead gain the +2 Dex and –2 Cha modifiers of the marksman. He does not gain or lose class skills or bonus feats by shifting models, and he cannot gain the special ability of the technical support model.

An Avatar must use an attack action and spend computing cycles to alter his model. If he spends 4 computing cycles, the change lasts for 10 minutes per Avatar level. If he spends 14 computing cycles, the change is permanent; he will have to use alter model again if he wishes to return to his original model.

When an Avatar selects this talent, he selects two models; he may only shift between his original model and the two that he has selected. He may take the talent a second time if he wishes to gain access to additional models; each time he takes the talent he may select an additional two models.

Prerequisite: Alter appearance.

Subroutine Port: Equipment is very important to Avatars; in most MMORPGs, clothes—or armor, or epic weapons—really do make the man. An Avatar with this talent gains an additional subroutine port. When this talent is selected, the Avatar must specify whether the port is defensive or

general; a character cannot have multiple offensive subroutine ports. This talent can be taken multiple times.

Roleplaying Talent Tree

An Avatar who takes talents from this tree comes from a MUDville roleplaying game, and he has developed one or more characters in these games. Each of these personas has its own specialties and powers, which are described below.

An Avatar can use only one persona at a time. Switching between personas is an attack action that costs 1 computing cycle. Each persona has a unique appearance (gender, height, race, age), which should be defined when the persona talent is chosen. If the Avatar has customization talents, changes to appearance or model only affect his current persona.

These talents have names tied to fantasy games, but the persona could actually represent a character from any genre; a rogue persona could be a fantasy thief, a pulp gumshoe, or a smuggler from a science fiction game.

Cleric Persona: This persona has the power to protect others. The Avatar receives a +2 bonus to Wisdom while using this persona, and he can add his Avatar level to Treat Injury checks. In addition, by spending computing cycles the character can cast the following divine spells, as if he was an Acolyte: *augury* (7 cycles), *bless* (3 cycles), *cure light wounds* (3 cycles), *searing light* (11 cycles), *shield of faith* (3 cycles), *status* (11 cycles). The caster level is equal to his Avatar level. See *d20 Modern* for the descriptions of these spells. *Searing light* is especially effective against MOBs that resemble undead creatures.

Fighter Persona: This enhances the Avatar's close combat ability. He gains a +2 bonus to Strength when using this personna. He can spend computing cycles to increase a melee attack or damage roll; cycles must be spent before the roll is made, and he cannot add an amount greater than his Avatar level. Finally, he can add his Avatar level to any grapple or bull rush checks.

Ranger Persona: The ranger is an expert at wilderness survival and ranged combat. He gains a +2 bonus to Dexterity when using this persona. He can spend computing cycles to increase a ranged attack or damage roll; cycles must be spent before the roll is made, and he cannot add an amount greater than his Avatar level. He can add his Avatar level to any Animal Empathy or Survival checks that he makes, and he receives the Track feat for as long as he remains in this persona.

Rogue Persona: This character excels at deception and intrigue. He gains a +2 bonus to Dexterity when using this persona. He may add his Avatar level to Disable Device, Hide, or Move Silently checks. Finally, when attacking a foe who is denied his Dexterity bonus to Defense, the rogue may spend computing cycles to add damage to a melee attack, at a cost of 2 cycles per additional 1d6 damage; he cannot spend more points than he has Avatar levels. The bonus to Disable Device only applies to mundane traps and locks, and does not apply if the Avatar uses *bypass security*.

Wizard Persona: The wizard can cast offensive spells. The Avatar receives a +2 Intelligence bonus while using this persona, and gains a +2 bonus on Engineering checks. In addition, by spending computing cycles, the character can cast the following arcane spells, as if he was a Mage: *burning hands* (3 cycles), *dispel magic* (11 cycles), *glitterdust* (7 cycles), *lightning bolt* (11 cycles), *magic missile* (3 cycles), *true strike* (3 cycles). The caster level is equal to his Avatar level, and the saving throw is 10 + Avatar's Int modifier + spell level. See *d20 Modern* for the descriptions of these spells. *Dispel magic* only works on actual magical effects–which is to say the powers of an Avatar wizard or cleric, or the abilities of a MOB in the shape of a supernatural creature.

BONUS FEATS

At 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th level, the Avatar gains a bonus feat. This feat must be selected from the following list, and the Avatar must meet any prerequisites.

Attentive, Confident, Deceptive, Frightful Presence, Lucky, Mule, Renown, Skill Focus, Subroutine Port, Trustworthy, Tell, Uncanny Luck, Versatile Attack.

THE PROGRAMMER

The ContiNet is formed from data and electrons. While it appears to be as solid and inflexible as the real world, there are those who can twist or bend the rules of reality. Most Programmers were software engineers or hackers in the real world, like Flynn from *Tron* or Hiro from *Snow Crash;* this background lets them understand and manipulate the underlying nature of the Net. But you don't have to be a techie to be a Programmer. You could be in the body of a game character with supernatural powers–a sorcerer whose abilities dwarf those of the Avatar's wizard persona, for example. Or you could simply have an innate, inexplicable talent for rewriting the code of reality, like Neo from *The Matrix*.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Programmers have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Intelligence and Charisma are both important abilities. A Programmer needs to purchase skill ranks to improve her coding abilities, and Charisma plays a key role in hacking or fighting viruses. Wisdom is less important, but it is the foundation of the Data Analysis skill.

Hit Die: d6.

Action Points

Programmers receive a number of action points equal to 5 + one-half their character level, rounded down, each time they attain a level in this class. A starting character with Programmer as her primary class receives 8 action points.

TABLE 1.2 THE PROGRAMMER

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Class Features	Cycles/Day	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Talent	4	+0	+1
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Coding skill	6	+1	+1
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Bonus feat	8	+1	+1
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Talent	14	+1	+2
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Bonus feat	20	+2	+2
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	Coding skill	30	+2	+2
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Talent	40	+2	+3
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	Bonus feat	54	+3	+3
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Talent	68	+3	+3
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	Coding skill	86	+3	+4

Class Skills

The Programmer's class skills, and the key ability for each skill, are as follows.

Concentration (Con), Computer Use (Int), Investigate (Int), Research (Int), and Search (Int).

The model that you select for your character may provide you with additional class skills. The coding skills—Data Analysis, Engineering, Hacking, and Software Utilities—are the source of your power, and you will want to focus on these whenever possible. However, these cannot be purchased as cross-class skills; you can only gain access to them by advancing in level or by choosing a techie model.

Skill Points at 1st level: (2 + Int Modifier) × 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int Modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the Programmer.

TALENTS

At 1st, 4th, and 7th level, the Programmer selects a talent from the following talent trees. Some have a set order that must be followed, while others provide a list to choose from.

Beginning Talents: *A character who selects Programmer as her primary class can choose between expert hacker, viruscan, or any talent from the sysadmin talent tree.*

Intrusion Talent Tree

Skilled hackers know a variety of tricks for beating the systems of the net.

Expert Hacker: A Programmer with this talent can add a bonus equal to her Programmer level on any Disable Device or Search check.

Stealth Software: The Programmer has a knack for staying out of the way of trouble, and can add her Programmer level to her Hide or Move Silently checks.

Prerequisite: Expert hacker.

Sysadmin Talent Tree

Many Programmers—especially tech supporters—have some background in system administration. A talented sysadmin can play a vital role in holding a group together.

Chat Channel: This is identical to the Avatar communication talent of the same name.

Coordinate: A Programmer with sysadmin experience is used to getting people to work together. If the Programmer can spend a full round directing her allies and makes a Charisma check (DC 10), she can provide any of her allies with a +1 bonus on their attack rolls and skill checks. The bonus lasts for a number of rounds equal to the Programmer's Charisma modifier.

A Programmer can coordinate a number of allies equal to one-half her Programmer level, rounded down (to a minimum of one ally).

System Familiarity: The Programmer is extremely familiar with the ContiNet. She may add her Programmer level to any Knowledge (Arcadia, MUDville, or Redlands) check. She can add half of her Programmer level (rounded down) to any Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check when she is dealing with MOBs or programs.

Prerequisite: Tech support model.

Viral Talent Tree

Like any computer system, the ContiNet is plagued by viruses—malicious entities that devour computing cycles and corrupt or destroy other programs. Hackers have a talent for working with viruses, while tech supporters are dedicated to rooting them out of the Psykey system.

Viruscan: A Programmer with this talent has the innate ability to sense the presence of viruses. This is a passive talent that does not require any action or expenditure of computing cycles. It has a base range of 50 feet, +5 feet for each rank of Data Analysis possessed by the Programmer. Initially, it simply provides a general sense of direction and location. By taking an attack action to make a Data Analysis check (DC 10 + the Hit Dice of the virus), the Programmer can learn the precise location, type, and number of Hit Dice of the virus.

If a virus is invisible, the Programmer can sense its general presence in the area covered by her viruscan, but she cannot sense any sort of direction or location and cannot make a Data Analysis check to gain further information.

Control Virus: A hacker can attempt to force a virus to do her bidding. This is identical to the Acolyte's ability to rebuke undead, as described in *d20 Modern*, except that it does not require a holy symbol. In place of her Acolyte level, the hacker should use a number equal to her Hacking ranks –3 to determine turning damage and the most powerful creature that she can effect. A Programmer can use control virus a number of times per day equal to 3 + her Charisma modifier.

Prerequisite: Viruscan, hacker model.

Purge Virus: This talent allows a tech support Programmer to turn or destroy a virus, just like an Acolyte turning undead. In place of her level, the programmer should use her Software Utilities ranks –3 to determine turning damage and the most powerful creature that she can effect. A Programmer can use purge virus a number of times per day equal to 3 + her Charisma modifier.

Prerequisite: Viruscan, tech support model.

CODING SKILLS

At 2nd, 6th, and 10th level, the Programmer may add one of the four coding skills to her programmer class skills list: Data Analysis, Engineering, Hacking, or Software Utilities.

BONUS FEATS

At 3rd, 5th, and 8th level, the Programmer gains a bonus feat. This feat must be selected from the following list, and the Programmer must meet any prerequisites.

Alertness, Expert Programmer, Improved Processor, Iron Will, Low Profile, Skill Focus, Studious, Watchdog.

THE TWITCH

The *Twitch* specializes in athletic abilities and infiltration. The Twitch is best represented by the heroes of *Donkey Kong* and *Sonic the Hedgehog*—characters whose primary goal is to reach a destination, to get over and around enemies as opposed to blasting their way through them. Lara Croft from *Tomb Raider* has both Twitch and Wargame levels; she is handy with her pistols, but her adventures generally involve more acrobatics than artillery.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Twitches have the following game statistics.

Abilities: As a Twitch, speed is your life and Dexterity your most important ability. A Twitch makes an excellent martial artist, and if you choose this path you will also want to have a good Strength score.

Hit Die: d8.

Action Points

Twitches receive a number of action points equal to 6 + one-half their character level, rounded down, each time they attain a level in this class. A starting character with Twitch as his primary class receives 9 action points.

Class Skills

The Twitch's class skills, and the key ability for each skill, are as follows.

Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Combat Code (None), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Jump (Dex), Knowledge (Arcadia) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), and Tumble (Dex).

The model that you select for your character may provide you with additional class skills.

Skill Points at 1st level: (4 + Int Modifier) × 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int Modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the Twitch.

TALENTS

At 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, the Twitch selects a talent from the following talent trees. Some have a set order that must be followed, while others provide a list to choose from.

Beginning Talents: A character who selects twitch as his primary class can choose between arcadian leap, evasion, or increased speed.

Acrobatics Talent Tree

Twitch games often require more jumping than actual combat, and a Twitch can develop incredible acrobatic abilities.

Arcadian Leap: The character can add a bonus equal to his Twitch level on Jump or Tumble checks. In addition, prior to making the skill check he can spend up to 3 computing cycles to gain a bonus on a Jump or Tumble check; each cycle provides a +1 bonus.

Improved Arcadian Leap: The Twitch's acrobatic abilities are truly astonishing. He adds twice his Twitch level to any Jump or Tumble check, and may use up to 6 computing cycles to improve the check at a rate of +1 per computing cycle spent.

Prerequisite: Arcadian leap.

Leaping Attack: This talent allows a Twitch to make impressive acrobatic attacks, using the momentum of a jump to add force to a melee attack.

To use this ability, the character must spend 1 action point or 4 computing cycles. He then leaps at his target; he must make a jump covering at least 10 feet before reaching his target. At this point, he makes a melee attack roll and (if successful) a Tumble check (DC 20); every point of success adds 1 point of damage to the melee attack. The Twitch can continue to travel another 10 feet after the attack, provided that his Jump check gave him this much distance to work with. He cannot move more than 10 feet after the attack, regardless of his Jump check.

Making a leaping attack is a full-round action; this includes a full move and Jump check.

Prerequisites: Arcadian leap.

Safe Fall: A Twitch with this ability can fall great distances without being hurt. For each Twitch level he possesses, the character can ignore 5 feet of distance when determining falling damage. So a 10th level Twitch can fall 50 feet without taking any damage at all!

Prerequisites: Arcadian leap.

Spring Heels: A Twitch with this talent no longer needs a running start in order to make an effective jump. The DC of Jump checks is no longer doubled when the Twitch makes a standing leap.

Prerequisites: Arcadian leap.

Defensive Talent Tree

While the Twitch does not have the raw firepower of the Wargame, he excels at staying out of the way of deadly attacks.

Evasion: If the Twitch is exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, he suffers no damage if he makes a successful saving throw.

Defensive Roll: The Twitch can roll with a potentially lethal attack to take less damage from it. When the Twitch would be reduced to 0 hit points or less by a ranged or melee attack, the twitch can spend 1 action point or 3 computing cycles to attempt to roll with the damage. After spending these points, he makes a Reflex saving throw (DC = damage dealt). If the save succeeds, he takes only half damage from the attack. The Twitch must be able to react to an attack in order to make a defensive roll; he cannot use this talent if he is immobilized.

The effects of the evasion talent do not apply to this check.

Uncanny Dodge 1: The Twitch retains his Dexterity bonus to Defense regardless of being caught flat-footed or struck by a hidden attacker. He still loses his Dexterity bonus to Defense if immobilized.

Prerequisite: Evasion.

Uncanny Dodge 2: The Twitch can no longer be flanked; he can react to opponents on opposite sides of himself as easily as he can react to a single attacker.

Prerequisite: Evasion, uncanny dodge 1.

Increased Speed Talent Tree

Speed plays a major role in Twitch games, and a Twitch can improve his natural base speed (and maximum jumping distance).

Increased Speed: The Twitch's base speed increases by 5 feet.

Improved Increased Speed: The Twitch's base speed increases by 5 feet. This talent stacks with increased speed (10 feet total).

Prerequisite: Increased speed.

TABLE 1.3 THE TWITCH

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Class Features	Cycles/Day	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Talent	2	+3	+0
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Bonus feat	3	+4	+0
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Talent	4	+4	+0
4	+3	+1	+4	+1	Bonus feat	7	+5	+0
5	+3	+1	+4	+1	Talent	10	+5	+1
6	+4	+2	+5	+2	Bonus feat	15	+6	+1
7	+5	+2	+5	+2	Talent	20	+6	+1
8	+6/+1	+2	+6	+2	Bonus feat	27	+7	+1
9	+6/+1	+3	+6	+3	Talent	34	+7	+2
10	+7/+2	+3	+7	+3	Bonus feat	43	+8	+2

Advanced Increased Speed: The Twitch's base speed increases by 5 feet. This talent stacks with increased speed and improved increased speed (15 feet total).

Prerequisite: Improved increased speed.

BONUS FEATS

At 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th level, the Twitch gains a bonus feat. This feat must be selected from the following list, and the Twitch must meet any prerequisites.

Acrobatic, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Deadly Speed, Dodge, Heroic Surge, Improved Initiative, Lightfooted, Lucky, Melee Combat Code, Turbo Boost, Uncanny Luck, Weapon Finesse.

THE WARGAME

The *Wargame* is the combat-oriented class. Classic examples of the Wargame include the nameless heroes of *Doom* and *Quake*—grim figures capable of producing a wide variety of heavy weapons from thin air. However, Wargames don't have to use ranged weapons; the class also covers martial arts fighting games like *Mortal Kombat* and *Soul Caliber*. Whether she's using ranged weapons or signature moves, the Wargame focuses on causing as much damage as possible.

GAME RULE INFORMATION

Wargames have the following game statistics.

Abilities: Strength is the most important characteristic for Wargames who intend to get up close and personal. Dexterity is important for ranged combat, gaining initiative, and avoiding attacks. And Constitution helps the Wargame take a lickin' and keep on tickin.'

Hit Die: d10.

Action Points

Wargames receive a number of action points equal to 5 + one-half their character level, rounded down, each time they attain a level in this class. A starting character with Wargame as her primary class receives 8 action points.

Class Skills

The Wargame's class skills, and the key ability for each skill, are as follows: Climb (Str), Combat Code (None), Demolitions (Int), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Arcadia) (Int), Knowledge (tactics) (Int), Spot (Wis), and Swim (Str).

The model that you select for your character may provide you with additional class skills.

Skill Points at 1st level: (2 + Int Modifier) × 4.

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int Modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the Wargame.

TALENTS

At 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, the Wargame selects a talent from the following talent trees. Some have a set order that must be followed, while others provide a list to choose from.

Beginning Talents: A character who selects Wargame as her primary class can take advanced melee combat, advanced ranged combat, remain conscious, robust, or second wind.

Melee Talent Tree

Melee specialists can take many forms. Some fight with their fists and feet, while others wield swords or nunchaku. Towering warriors may share a ring with ninja turtles. Regardless of shape, the melee specialist can inflict devastating damage at close range.

Advanced Melee Combat: This talent provides the Wargame with three benefits. First, her effective Combat Code rank is increased by 2 for purposes of determining the amount of damage she inflicts with melee attacks.

Second, the Wargame may choose to inflict normal or nonlethal damage when she makes a melee attack.

Finally, the Wargame may choose to spend computing cycles to increase a melee attack or damage roll. She gains a +1 bonus for each cycle that she spends. The maximum number of cycles that she can apply to a single roll is equal to her Wargame level, and the cycles must be spent before the roll is made. When spending cycles to increase the power of an attack, the Wargame is encouraged to describe the nature of the attack; this typically represents a flash or special move that is more effective than her usual strike.

Prerequisites: Melee Combat Code.

Block: On her action, a Wargame can designate a single opponent. If that opponent makes a successful melee attack against the Wargame, she can oppose it with a Combat Code check; the DC is her opponent's attack roll. If she is successful, the damage from the attack is reduced by 10 + her Wargame level; this cannot reduce the damage below zero.

A Wargame must spend 1 computing cycle to attempt to block an attack. She can attempt to block multiple attacks in the same round, but the cycle cost doubles with each block; blocking four attacks in a single round would cost 15 cycles.

The Wargame can switch her focus to block the attacks of a different opponent on any subsequent action.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat.

Iron Fist: After making a successful melee attack, the Wargame can spend an action point to increase the damage of the attack. The result of the action point roll is added to the damage roll for that attack.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat.

TABLE 1.4 THE WARGAME

Class Levels	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Class Features	Cycles/Day	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+1	+1	+1	+0	Talent	2	+1	+0
2	+2	+2	+2	+0	Bonus feat	3	+2	+0
3	+3	+2	+2	+1	Talent	4	+2	+0
4	+4	+2	+2	+1	Bonus feat	7	+3	+0
5	+5	+3	+3	+1	Talent	10	+3	+1
6	+6/+1	+3	+3	+2	Bonus feat	15	+3	+1
7	+7/+2	+4	+4	+2	Talent	20	+4	+1
8	+8/+3	+4	+4	+2	Bonus feat	27	+4	+1
9	+9/+4	+4	+4	+3	Talent	34	+5	+2
10	+10/+5	+5	+5	+3	Bonus feat	43	+5	+2

Combo Move: When the Wargame increases the damage of a melee attack—by using iron fist or advanced melee combat—she can apply the bonus damage to all melee attacks that she makes during the round.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat, iron fist.

Finishing Move: The wargame can spend 5 computing cycles to inflict maximum damage with a melee attack (including the action point bonus from iron fist, if it is used), as long as this will reduce her enemy below 0 hit points. This is declared after the attack has been made but before damage is rolled.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat, iron fist.

Flurry of Blows: A Wargame can strike with devastating speed but reduced accuracy. She can make one additional melee attack per round, using her highest base attack bonus. However, this attack and all other attacks made during the round suffer a –2 penalty. Using this talent is a full-round action.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat, iron fist.

Ranged Talent Tree

Shooting games are one of the most popular forms of modern entertainment. While many of these take the form of a soldier with a gun, this is by no means exclusive. All of the characters in *Gauntlet* could be seen as shooters. And when it comes down to it, *Space Invaders* was a shooting game...

Advanced Ranged Combat: This talent provides the Wargame with two benefits. First, her effective Combat Code rank is increased by 2 for purposes of determining the amount of damage she inflicts with ranged attacks.

Second, the range increment of her ranged attacks is increased by 10 feet.

Third, the Wargame may choose to spend computing cycles to increase a ranged attack roll. She gains a +1 bonus for each cycle that she spends. The maximum number of cycles that she can apply to a single roll is equal to her Wargame level, and the cycles must be spent before the roll is made.

Prerequisites: Ranged Combat Code.

Close Combat Shot: This talent allows the Wargame to make a ranged attack while in a threatened area without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Prerequisites: Advanced ranged combat.

Lightning Shot: A Wargame can fire quickly at the cost of accuracy. She can make one additional ranged attack per round, using her highest base attack bonus. However, this attack and all other attacks made during the round suffer a –2 penalty. Using this talent is a full-round action.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat.

Deadly Aim: After making a successful ranged attack, the Wargame can spend an action point to increase the damage of the attack. The result of the action point roll is added to the damage roll for that attack.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat and either lightning shot or close combat shot.

Explosive Attack: An explosive attack can take many forms: it might be a grenade, a spell, or a rocket launcher. Whatever the appearance, this is an attack action that costs 8 computing cycles. It inflicts twice the Wargame's usual ranged damage over a 20-foot area. Victims can make a Reflex saving throw (DC 10 + the shooter's Wargame level) to take half damage from the attack. When she selects this talent, the Wargame must define the energy type of the attack (acid, bludgeoning, cold, electrical, fire, piercing, slashing, or sonic/concussion); if she has the Versatile Attack feat, she can change the energy type with every shot.

Prerequisites: Advanced melee combat and either lightning shot or close combat shot.

Unbreakable Talent Tree

Wargames are designed to take more punishment than most other characters. A Wargame can keep going after taking damage that would cause any other character to punch the big reset button in the sky.

Remain Conscious: When a Wargame's hit points reach –1, she can choose to perform as if she was disabled, making either an attack action or move action each round until she reaches -10 hit points (and dies) or until her hit points are restored to 1 or higher.

Robust: When a Wargame takes this talent, she permanently gains a number of hit points equal to her Wargame level. Thereafter, she gains +1 hit point every time she gains an additional level of Wargame.

Second Wind: As a free action, the Wargame can spend an action point to regain a number of hit points equal to her Constitution modifier. This cannot increase her hit points beyond her full normal total.

Damage Reduction 2/– : The wargame can ignore 2 points of damage from all ranged and melee attacks.

Prerequisites: Any two unbreakable talents.

BONUS FEATS

At 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th level, the Wargame gains a bonus feat. This feat must be selected from the following list, and the wargame must meet any prerequisites.

Advanced Armor Proficiency, Advanced Weapon Proficiency, Combat Expertise, Deadly Speed, Dodge, Improved Defense, Increased Range, Melee Combat Code, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Quick Draw, Ranged Combat Code, Versatile Attack, Weapon Finesse.

SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

For the most part, the ContiNet is a mirror of the real world. You may be made of ones and zeroes, but you're still designed to resemble a human (or an elf, or a high-jumping humanoid poodle) and skills like Treat Injury can be used normally.

There are a few new skills that are very important in *Deathnet*, and a few skills that work in a different manner than they do in *d20 Modern*. If a skill is not mentioned here, assume that it can be used normally.

COMBAT CODE (NONE)

Equipment plays a very different role in *Deathnet* than it does in the physical world. In *Deathnet*, all of your capabilities are determined by the nature of your program. If you're a soldier, you have a gun. You can't lose it, and you can't give it away–it's part of who you are. It vanishes when you want it to go away, and reappears when you need it. You may find subroutines that increase the range, power, or accuracy of the attack, but the base damage is determined by you–or rather, by your ranks in Combat Code.

Check: The primary use of Combat Code is to determine the amount of damage you inflict in combat. This does not require a skill check; it is simply based on your skill value (skill ranks plus any modifiers from feats, class abilities, subroutines, or power-ups). The damage table can be found in Chapter Three.

The Wargame talent block requires a Combat Code check.

Restrictions: In order to take ranks in the Combat Code skill–regardless of whether it is a class skill for your character–you must possess the Melee Combat Code or Ranged Combat Code feat.

If you do not possess either of these feats, you are limited to melee combat and only inflict 1d3 points of nonlethal damage. However, you do not suffer any of the usual penalties for making an unarmed attack.

COMPUTER USE (INT)

Computer Use does not allow you to actually affect the ContiNet in any meaningful way–that's what the Data Analysis, Engineering, Hacking, and Software Utilities skills are for. But it does let you make use of "computers" that you find IN the ContiNet. So if you plan to spend a lot of time hanging out in the science fiction or cyberpunk sections of MUDville, it may prove useful. But when you're chasing dragons in *ForeverQuest*, the odds are that you won't find many computers.

DISABLE DEVICE (INT)

Trained Only

MUDville dungeons are full of traps and locked chests, and Disable Device works normally when used against these challenges. But you will also come up against more difficult challenges–barriers or security systems created by the Psykey engineers. These cannot be overcome through the use of a mundane skill, and any attempt to disable them through normal means automatically triggers intrusion countermeasures. In order to overcome these challenges, you must use the bypass security coding ability, which is described in more detail in Chapter Two. This allows you to make a Disable Device check against these advanced systems, and may even provide you with a bonus to these checks.

DATA ANALYSIS (WIS)

Trained Only

The ContiNet is an illusion. It is a vast web of complicated data, designed to appear in a form that humans can understand. Using this skill, you can see beneath the surface to perceive the true shape of things. The benefits can be as simple as seeing in the "dark" to something as esoteric and complicated as reading the thoughts of another creature.

Check: The primary use of this skill is to provide a character with access to coding effects, as described in Chapter Two. In addition, you may substitute a Data Analysis check for a Sense Motive or Search check by spending 6 computing cycles. You cannot take 20 on a Search check while using Data Analysis.

Special: Data Analysis cannot be purchased as a cross-class skill unless the character has Programmer levels and possesses Data Analysis as a Programmer class skill.

ENGINEERING (INT)

Trained Only

A skilled engineer can reshape the reality of the ContiNet. Typically, Engineering allows you to enhance the abilities of programs and characters, adjusting their underlying code to provide increased strength, speed, or other abilities. However, Engineering can also be used for more dramatic effects–materializing bolts of electricity or walls of flame, or transporting your comrades from one place to another in the blink of an eye.

Check: The primary use of this skill is to provide a character with access to Coding abilities, as described in Chapter Two.

Special: Engineering cannot be purchased as a cross-class skill unless the character has Programmer levels and possesses Engineering as a Programmer class skill.

HACKING (CHA)

Trained Only

Hacking is your ability to disrupt and deceive the normal systems of the ContiNet. This is more subtle than Engineering, and does not involve bolts of fire or lightning. Instead you can render yourself invisible, seize control of MOBs, or even write your own viruses.

Check: The primary use of this skill is to provide a character with access to Coding abilities, as described in Chapter Two. Hacking also plays a major role in cracking the deadly traps of the Net; see *bypass security* in Chapter Two for more information.

Special: Hacking cannot be purchased as a cross-class skill unless the character has Programmer levels and possesses Hacking as a Programmer class skill.

KNOWLEDGE (INT)

Trained Only

The normal Knowledge skills—current events, business, history, and the like—are rarely useful in the ContiNet, which is its own self-contained universe. Knowing the history of the real world won't tell you what you need to know about the Dwarven Wars of *Battlecraft*. However, there are four Knowledge specialties that reflect familiarity with the Net itself, and these may prove useful. These relate to the four servers of the ContiNet:

Knowledge (Arcadia)
Knowledge (Hub City)
Knowledge (MUDville)
Knowledge (Redlands)

Each of these specialties reflects a broad knowledge of the area in question, and allows you to gain information about the history (albeit fabricated) of the region, important locations, and the nature of its inhabitants, along with the usual benefits of Knowledge (streetwise).

One traditional Knowledge skill that is often found in *Deathnet* is Knowledge (tactics). Some Wargames prefer a wild fire-and-forget approach to combat, but others take great pains to analyze the battlefield and determine optimal strategies.

Synergy: If you possess 5 or more ranks in a regional Knowledge skill, you gain a +2 synergy bonus on Gather Information or Survival checks you make while in that region.

JUMP (DEX)

Subroutine Penalty

In the ContiNet, Jump is based on Dexterity instead of Strength; small, quick characters can generally jump farther than massive, powerful characters. In addition, characters can make far more impressive high jumps than they can in the real world. The difficulty of a high jump is equal to the height of the jump (in feet) × 3. As usual, the DC of the jump is doubled if the character cannot move at least 20 feet in a straight line before attempting the jump.

Size plays a very limited role in *Deathnet*. Players are free to select the general size of their character, but unless a character takes the Enormous Size feat, he is assumed to have a maximum height of 8 feet. A medium sized human can reach that distance normally, a tiny mouse can leap up to grab something without making a Jump check, and a large robot mysteriously can't bend its arms to reach above its head (unless it takes the Enormous Size feat).

SLEIGHT OF HAND (DEX)

Trained Only, Subroutine Penalty

The inhabitants of the ContiNet don't actually carry physical objects. If you are exceptionally skillful, you can remove a subroutine or power-up from a victim's inventory slots, but this requires a check against DC 30. However, size is meaningless when dealing with subroutines, so you can steal a rocket launcher as easily as a pocketknife. The victim still gets to oppose your check with a Spot check.

SOFTWARE UTILITIES (INT)

Trained Only

Software Utilities are the primary tools of systems administrator and technical support agents. Using this skill and its associated abilities, you can repair damaged or corrupted programs and overcome viruses and hacker attacks.

Check: The primary use of this skill is to provide a character with access to Coding abilities, as described in Chapter Two. In addition, you may substitute a Software Utilities check for a Treat Injury check by spending 4 computing cycles.

Special: Software Utilities cannot be purchased as a cross-class skill unless the character has Programmer levels and possesses Software Utilities as a Programmer class skill.

SPEAK LANGUAGE

The ContiNet has an embedded translation program. As a result, any of the standard languages of Earth are automatically translated into your preferred language. This is represented by the Common tongue—which is at once no language and every language. However, there are a few unusual languages that the translators are not equipped to handle, ranging from the leetspeak of the hacker community to the programming languages used by software engineers and the natives of the net. Unlike the standard *d20 Modern* rules, if you can speak a language you are also able to read and write that language.

The common languages of the ContiNet are described below. The Gamemaster is free to add languages as she sees fit, so if you desperately want to speak Lisp, you can probably live your dream.

Language	Common Speakers
Common	Everyone
13375p34|<	Hackers, gamers
C++	Programmers, programs
Java	Programmers, programs
Elvish	Fantasy fans
Klingon	Science fiction fans

SURVIVAL (WIS)

The rules of reality vary greatly from server to server, and from region to region within a specific server. In most areas, characters do not need to eat, sleep, or worry about the weather, and Survival is irrelevant. In other places these threats are even more serious than usual, but Survival will not help. When you're running the *Gauntlet* and Red Wizard needs food badly, a Survival check won't help you—you need to keep moving and hope that you happen to find some food lying on the ground.

However, there are a few areas—notably the fantasy realms of MUDville—where great pains have been taken to make the experience as lifelike as possible. In these regions, Survival can be used for all its usual purposes.

FEATS

The following *d20 Modern* feats are not used in *Deathnet*: Advanced Combat Martial Arts, Advanced Two-Weapon Fighting, Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Armor Proficiency (Light, Medium, Heavy), Brawl, Combat Martial Arts, Exotic Firearms Proficiency, Exotic Melee Weapon Proficiency, Improved Brawl, Improved Combat Martial Arts, Improved Damage Threshold, Improved Knockout Punch, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Knockout Punch, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Quick Reload, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Two-Weapon Fighting, Streetfighting, and Windfall.

Ranged Combat Code takes the place of Personal Firearms Proficiency for purposes of prerequisites; a character who has Ranged Combat Code can take Advanced Firearms Proficiency, for example. Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Burst Fire, and Strafe all apply to any subroutine that allows a character to perform autofire attacks.

The prerequisites for Improved Feint are changed to Int 13, Combat Expertise.

This section provides information on new feats and feats with modified functionality. If a feat is not mentioned in this section, it works as described in the *d20 Modern* rulebook.

ADVANCED ARMOR PROFICIENCY

You can pile on the armor plating and heavy shielding. Apparently, you've got issues to deal with.

Prerequisites: Combat Code 7 ranks.

Benefit: You can install advanced defensive subroutines.

Normal: A character who does not possess this feat can install only basic defensive subroutines.

ADVANCED WEAPON PROFICIENCY

You know those guys you see in fighting games who can wield swords that are bigger then they are? You're one of those guys.

Prerequisites: Combat Code 7 ranks.

Benefit: You can install advanced offensive subroutines.

Normal: A character who does not possess this feat can install only basic offensive subroutines.

DEADLY SPEED

In fighting games, the tiny ninja can hit just as hard as the massive, muscular bruiser. You may rely on speed instead of strength, but your attacks are still deadly.

Prerequisites: Weapon Finesse.

Benefit: You add your Dexterity modifier to the damage of melee attacks instead of your Strength Modifier.

ENORMOUS SIZE

You are between 9 and 16 feet tall, and the world knows it. Normally size doesn't matter; in your case, the ContiNet has made an exception.

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus on Grapple checks and a 10-ft. reach in melee combat. However, you suffer a –4 penalty on Hide checks and a –1 penalty to Defense. In addition, you occupy a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area in combat. You have a maximum height of 16 feet.

Normal: A normal character takes up a 5-ft.-by 5-ft. area and has a 5-ft. reach.

Special: You cannot take both this feat and the Tiny feat.

EXPERT PROGRAMMER

You have the 133t $|<!11z, dude.

Prerequisite: You must possess at least one rank of the skill that you wish to enhance with Expert Programmer.

Benefit: Pick one of the following skills: Data Analysis, Engineering, Hacking, or Software Utilities. You gain two ranks in the chosen skill. These ranks are not taken into account when determining the maximum number of ranks you can have in the skill based on your level.

Special: You may take this feat up to four times, but you must choose a different skill each time.

IMPROVED DEFENSE

You have a knack for avoiding damage. Depending on your source game, this may be derived from armor, speed, or pure luck. Whatever the basis for it, your enemies have a more difficult time landing a meaningful blow on you.

Benefit: You receive a +1 Defense bonus.

IMPROVED PROCESSOR

You know all that money you spent to get the ultimate gaming machine? Well, it finally paid off. Because of the advanced hardware you possess in the real world, your character has enhanced abilities in the ContiNet.

Benefit: Add your character level to your total number of computing cycles per day. For example, as a 4th-level character you receive an additional 4 computing cycles each day.

INCREASED RANGE

This feat increases the accuracy of your ranged attacks when you are firing at a distant target. If you're flinging hand-axes, you may not expect to have much of a range—but if you're shooting a rifle, you'll want to be able to get a little distance.

Prerequisites: Ranged Combat Code.

Benefit: The range increment of any ranged attack you make is increased by 30 feet.

Normal: The basic range increment of a ranged attack is 20 feet.

Special: You may take this feat multiple times; the effects are cumulative. Increased Range also stacks with any sort of subroutine that increases the range of an attack.

LIGHTFOOTED

You are able to incorporate subroutines in a more efficient manner than most characters—which can be extremely important when you need to leap over the Bottomless Chasm of Spiky Death.

Benefit: The encumbrance penalty of all of the subroutines that you use is reduced by 1.

LUCKY

Things always seem to go your way!

Benefit: You receive one additional action point each time you gain a level.

MARKETING WEASEL

You're a Psykey marketing executive who decided to give the ContiNet a whirl to help you come up with ideas for new slogans. You've been trained to get people to see things your way—but you're not much of a gamer and you don't really understand how to interact with computer-controlled creatures.

Benefit: You receive a +2 bonus on Diplomacy, Bluff, or Intimidate checks when dealing with organics, but you take a –1 penalty on these checks when dealing with programs, viruses, or MOBs.

Special: You can take this feat only during character generation.

MELEE COMBAT CODE

In *Deathnet*, you don't acquire physical weaponry; instead you fight your opponents by using your programmed abilities. The amount of damage you can inflict on your enemies is determined by your Combat Code skill (see page 90). However, the modes of attack that are available depend upon your feats. This feat allows you to engage your enemies in melee combat. The form of the attack is up to you; you may fight with a sword, your fists, or a ridiculous-looking cartoon hammer.

Benefit: You may use your ranks in Combat Code to increase your damage in melee combat. The amount of damage you inflict can be found on page 99.

Normal: If you do not possess this feat, you inflict 1d3 points of nonlethal damage in melee combat.

Special: When you obtain this feat, you must select the type of damage that you inflict with your melee attack—bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing. If you wish to inflict more exotic forms of damage, you must obtain an offensive subroutine or the Versatile Attack feat.

MULE

You can carry an unusually large number of subroutines.

Benefit: You gain six additional inventory slots. A slot can hold one subroutine or two power-ups. This does not allow you to install more subroutines than usual; it simply allows you to carry additional equipment.

Normal: A normal character has six inventory slots. See Chapter Four for additional information on subroutines and power-ups.

Special: You may select this feat multiple times. Each time you take it, it provides you with an additional six inventory slots.

PROTECTED INVENTORY

Subroutines and power-ups cannot be removed from your inventory slots. This feat is especially common among MOB merchants; this prevents powerful Wargames from killing the merchant and taking his goods.

Benefit: *Subroutines and power-ups in your inventory slots cannot be* removed by Sleight of Hand, and they are not dropped if you are killed; instead, they fade away with your corpse and are lost forever.

Normal: Subroutines or power-ups in inventory slots are dropped upon death.

QUICK DRAW

In *Deathnet*, characters do not carry physical equipment; this feat lets you switch between your offensive subroutines in the blink of an eye.

Benefit: Quick Draw lets you activate or switch offensive subroutines as a free action.

Normal: *Activating or switching between offensive subroutines is a* move action.

RANGED COMBAT CODE

This feat allows you to make ranged attacks. Depending upon your model, you may use a gun or a bow, or you may spit fireballs at your enemies.

Benefit: You may make ranged attacks. The amount of damage is determined by your Combat Code skill bonus. The range increment for the attack is 20 feet.

Normal: You cannot make a ranged attack unless you possess this feat.

Special: When you obtain this feat, you must select the type of damage *that you inflict with your ranged attack–acid, bludgeoning, cold, electrical,* fire, piercing, slashing, or sonic/concussion. Once you have made your selection, the only way to change the type of damage that you inflict is to obtain a subroutine that alters your attack type or to take the Versatile Attack feat.

SKILL FOCUS

Choose any one skill, such as Move Silently or Data Analysis. You have a special knack with that skill.

Benefit: You get a +3 bonus on all checks involving the chosen skill.

Special: You can select this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. *Each time you take the feat, it applies to a new skill.*

SUBROUTINE PORT

Subroutines are *Deathnet's* equivalent of equipment. A subroutine can provide you with new or enhanced abilities. However, there is a limit to the number of subroutines you can have installed at any one time. A subroutine port allows you to make use of additional upgrades.

Benefit: You gain an additional subroutine port that can be used with general subroutines or power-ups.

Normal: A character has one slot for offensive subroutines, two slots for defensive subroutines, and three slots for general subroutines or power-ups.

TINY

Size generally doesn't matter in the ContiNet, but in your case it does. Your small size helps you to avoid your enemies, but it does handicap you in a few minor ways.

Benefit: You receive a +4 bonus on Hide checks and a +1 bonus to Defense. However, you only have 4 inventory slots, and the maximum distance you can reach without having to make a Jump check is 4 feet.

Normal: A normal character has 6 inventory slots and a maximum Jump reach of 8 feet.

Special: You cannot take both this feat and the Enormous Size feat.

TURBO BOOST

You can move with incredible speed for short periods of time. This is a taxing experience, but it's just the thing when you've absolutely, positively got to be there right away.

Benefit: You may spend a computing cycle to increase your Speed by 5 feet. You can increase your Speed by a maximum of 15 feet. The boost lasts for 3 rounds. The speed bonus from Turbo Boost stacks with bonuses from subroutines, power-ups, and class or model abilities.

UNCANNY LUCK

You never seem to run out of luck!

Prerequisites: *Lucky.*

Benefit: When you use an action point, you can spend a number of computing cycles equal to 2 + your character level to save the action point.

VERSATILE ATTACK

Whereas most characters inflict only a single type of damage in combat (relying on fists, blades, or bullets to get the job done) you can fall back on a vast array of different attack forms. You may be a mini-mech with an assortment of different weapons to choose from, a die-hard commando toting a backpack full of hardware, or a wizard who can switch between fire, lightning, and ice bolts in the blink of an eye. Whatever the window *dressing, you can produce whatever type of damage a situation calls for.*

Benefit: As an attack action, you can switch the type of damage that you produce with a Combat Code attack. The primary use for this feat is to overcome the resistances of enemies or to take advantage of special vulnerabilities. You cannot switch the energy type of a coding effect, and you cannot change the energy type of an offensive subroutine (if it is specified).

Normal: A normal character must select a single form of damage when she picks Melee Combat Code or Ranged Combat Code.

WATCHDOG

You are extremely sensitive to the disruptions caused by people hacking the reality of the ContiNet.

Prerequisites: Data Analysis 4 ranks.

Benefit: Whenever a Hacking ability is used within 60 feet of you, make a Data Analysis check (DC 5 + the target's ranks in Hacking). If you are successful, you sense the use of the power and the location of the hacker. If you make the check by 5 or more points, you also learn the nature of the power that was used and the location of the target.

CHAPTER TWO: CODING

"I should have known we'd find you here, Norton."

"That's right, Phreak," Norton sneered. "For all your so-called 'leet skills,' you fell right into my trap." He gestured, and a wall of shimmering ICE rose up to surround the team.

"Nice trick, Norton. But don't count the 1337 5I<!!!z out yet, dOOd!" The Phreak traced luminescent patterns in the air and the barrier melted away. Another gesture sent a ball of light directly into the face of the tech support agent, dazing him long enough for Wallaby Jack and the Viscount to leap into action.

The ContiNet is a virtual reality. Every element of the world is defined by an underlying system of computer code. While trapped within the Net, you cannot directly access this code. However, through force of will and applied logic, you can alter reality in minor ways—healing an ally, dissolving a barrier, analyzing a program to determine its true nature, or forcing a MOB to do your bidding.

In some ways, coding abilities are similar to psionic FX powers. You do not have to prepare a coding action in advance. Instead, you expend a certain number of computing cycles to perform the action. Like psionic powers, the cost of the action is based on its level, as shown on table 2.1. Computing cycles regenerate automatically every 24 hours.

With that said, there are many differences between coding abilities and other FX powers. Coding abilities are entirely based on the four coding skills: Data Analysis, Engineering, Hacking, and Software Utilities. Your ranks with these skills determine both the abilities you can use and the power of those abilities.

Each coding ability is tied to a particular skill. Table 2.1 shows the minimum number of ranks required to use abilities of a particular level. So if you possess 4 ranks of Data Analysis, you can use 0- and 1st-level coding abilities tied to Data Analysis: *analyze program*, *analyze subroutine*, and, *dataflow*.

Your ranks in the associated skill also determine the power of the coding effect. Any formula that normally calls for caster level should instead use your ranks in the associated skill reduced by three, with a minimum value of one. So if you have 6 ranks in Data Analysis and 4 ranks in Engineering, you are considered to be a 3rd-level caster when using Analysis effects and a 1st level caster for purposes of Engineering.

Finally, the saving throw DC to resist a coding effect is based entirely on skill as opposed to the level of the effect. The base save DC of a coding effect is 8. Add half of your modifier in the associated skill, rounding down. This includes skill ranks, your ability modifier, and any other bonuses. So a programmer with 5 ranks of Hacking, a +2 Charisma modifier, and a +3 bonus from the Skill Focus (Hacking) feat would have a save DC of 13 for any Hacking effect.

With a few exceptions these powers are identical to FX abilities presented in *d20 Modern* or the Dungeons & Dragons *Player's Handbook*. The names of new powers are italicized and descriptions of these powers are provided later in this section. One primary difference between coding effects and the FX abilities that they resemble is that coding never requires verbal or material components, and always have audible and visual manifestations. Unless otherwise mentioned, coding is an attack action that provokes an attack of opportunity. Like other FX abilities, coding attempts fail if your concentration is broken while you are performing the action.

Table 2.1: Coding Restrictions and Costs

Power Level	Ranks Required	Cycle Cost
0	1	1
1st	4	2
2nd	7	6
3rd	10	10
4th	12	14
5th	14	18

CODING EFFECTS

0-LEVEL CODING

Cure Minor Wounds (*Software Utilities*). Cures 1 point of damage (*d20 Modern, cure minor wounds*).

Daze (*Hacking*). Subject takes no actions for 1 round (*d20 Modern, daze*).

Disruption (*Hacking*). Touch attack fatigues target (D&D, *touch of fatigue*).

Light (*Engineering*). Object shines like a torch (*d20 Modern, light*).

Remote Manipulation (*Engineering*). 5-pound telekinesis (*d20 Modern, mage hand*).

Resistance (*Software Utilities*). Subject gains +1 on saving throws (*d20 Modern, resistance*).

Study Dataflow (*Data Analysis*). Detect all coding effects or power-ups within 60 ft.

1ST-LEVEL CODING

Analyze Program (*Data Analysis*). Provides details about a target creature.

Analyze Subroutine (*Data Analysis*). Reveal an object's past (*d20 Modern, object reading*; affects subroutines or power-ups)

Bypass Security (*Hacking*). Assists Disable Device checks.

Cure Light Wounds (*Software Utilities*). Cures 1d8+1/level damage (max +5)(*d20 Modern, cure light wounds*).

Datashield (*Engineering*). Gives subject +4 Defense bonus (*d20 Modern, mage armor*).

Disrupting Ray (*Hacking*). Ray fatigues target (*d20 Modern, ray of fatigue*).

Hold Portal (*Software Utilities*). Holds door shut (*d20 Modern, hold portal*).

Jump (*Engineering*). Subject gains bonus on Jump checks (*d20 Modern*).

Subvert MOB (*Hacking*). Makes target MOB your friend (*d20 Modern, charm person*; only affects humanoid MOBs).

Speed of the Wind (*Engineering*). Subject's speed increases by 20 ft.

2ND-LEVEL CODING

Blur (*Engineering*). Attacks miss subject 20% of the time (*d20 Modern, blur*).

Compel MOB (*Hacking*) Target MOB is compelled to follow suggested course of action (*d20 Modern, suggestion*; only affects MOBs).

Cure Moderate Wounds (*Software Utilities*). Cures 2d8+1/level damage (max +10) (*d20 Modern, cure moderate wounds*).

Darkvision (*Data Analysis*). See 60 ft. in total darkness (*d20 Modern, darkvision*).

Decrypt Thoughts (*Data Analysis*). Detect target's surface thoughts (*d20 Modern, detect thoughts*).

Enhance Ability (*Engineering*). Subject gains +5 bonus to one ability score for 1 min./level (*d20 Modern, enhance ability*).

Goo Glob (*Engineering*). Fills 20-ft. radius spread with sticky spider webs (*d20 Modern, web*).

Invisibility (*Hacking*). Subject is invisible for 10 min./level or until it attacks (d20 Modern, *invisibility*).

Lesser Restoration (*Software Utilities*). Dispels coded ability penalty or repairs 1d4 ability damage (*d20 Modern, lesser restoration*).

Resist Energy (*Engineering*). Ignore 10 pts of damage/round from one energy type (*d20 Modern, resist energy*).

Restore Crashed System (*Software Utilities*). Removes crash conditions from the target.

See Invisibility (*Data Analysis*). Reveals invisible creatures or objects (*d20 Modern, see invisibility*).

Systems Freeze (*Hacking*). (*d20 Modern, brain lock*; this is a crash condition).

CIM (*Software Utilities*). Cancels Hacking effects (*d20 Modern, dispel magic*; targets any Hacking effect).

Write Virus I (*Hacking*) Creates temporary virus to fight for you.

3RD-LEVEL CODING

Babelfish (*Data Analysis*). Speak any language (*d20 Modern, tongues*).

Clairaudience/Clairvoyance (*Data Analysis*) Range limited to current server (*d20 Modern, clairaudience/clairvoyance*; range limited to current server).

Cure Serious Wounds (*Software Utilities*). Cures 3d8+1/level damage (max +10) (*d20 Modern, cure serious wounds*).

Disrupt Coding (*Hacking*). Cancels coding effects (*d20 Modern, dispel magic*; targets any coding effect).

False Sensory Input (*Hacking*). (*d20 Modern, false sensory input*).

Fireball (*Engineering*). 1d6 damage/lever, 20-ft radius (*d20 Modern, fireball*).

Halt Virus (*Software Utilities*). Immobilizes viruses for 1 round/level (*d20 Modern, halt undead*; affects viruses).

Haste (*Engineering*). Extra attack action, additional move, and +2 Defense (*d20 Modern, haste*).

Lag (*Hacking*). One subject/level may only move or attack; -2 to Defense, -2 on melee attack and damage rolls, -2 on Reflex saves (*d20 Modern, slow*).

Lesser Override (*Hacking*). Forces target to obey your will (*d20 Modern, lesser domination*).

Lightning Bolt (*Engineering*). Electricity deals 1d6/level (*d20 Modern, lightning bolt*).

Search Engine/Subroutine (*Data Analysis*). Senses direction towards subroutine or power-up, either specific or general type (*d20 Modern, locate object*).

Security Protocol (*Software Utilities*). Inscription harms those who pass it. (*d20 Modern, glyph of warding*).

Streamline Systems (*Engineering*). Allies get +1 on most rolls, and enemies suffer –1 (*d20 Modern, prayer*).

4TH-LEVEL CODING

FUBAR (*Hacking*). Makes subject behave oddly for 1 round/level. This is an infection condition (*d20 Modern, confusion*).

Corrupt System (*Hacking*). -6 to an ability; -4 on attacks, saves, and checks; or 50% chance of losing an action. This is an infection condition (*d20 Modern, bestow curse*).

Cure Critical Wounds (*Software Utilities*). Cures 4d8+1/level damage (max +10) (*d20 Modern, cure critical wounds*).

Discern Lies (*Data Analysis*). Reveals deliberate falsehoods (*d20 Modern, discern lies*).

Firewall (*Engineering*). Deals 2d4 fire damage out to 10 ft. and 1d4 out to 20 ft. Passing through wall deals 2d6+1/level (*d20 Modern, wall of fire*).

ICE Storm (*Engineering*). Hail deals 5d6 damage in cylinder 40 ft. across (*d20 Modern, ice storm*).

Invisibility Sphere (*Hacking*). Makes everyone within 10 ft. invisible (*d20 Modern, confusion*).

Remove Infection (*Software Utilities*) Remove infection condition.

Restoration (*Software Utilities*). Restores level or ability score drains. (*d20 Modern, restoration*).

Ride Datastream (*Engineering*). Teleports you and up to 50 lbs./level (*d20 Modern, dimension door*).

Search Engine/Individual (*Data Analysis*). Indicates direction toward familiar creature (D&D, *locate creature*).

Sensor (*Data Analysis*) Invisible floating eye moves 30 ft./level. (*d20 Modern, arcane eye*).

Sphere of Stability (*Software Utilities*). Stops 1st- through 3rd- level coding effects. (*d20 Modern, minor globe of invulnerability*).

System Override (*Hacking*). Subject obeys your will. (*d20 Modern, domination*).

Wall of ICE (*Engineering*). *ICE plane* creates wall with 15 hp +1/level, or *hemisphere* can trap creatures inside (*d20 Modern, wall of ice*).

5TH-LEVEL CODING

Black ICE (*Engineering*). 1d6 cold damage/level (*d20 Modern, cone of cold*).

Deep Analysis (*Data Analysis*). See all things as they really are. (*d20 Modern, true seeing*).

Mass Cure Light Wounds (*Software Utilities*). Cures 1d8 +1 per level damage for many creatures (*d20 Modern, mass cure light wounds*).

Mindprobe (*Data Analysis*). Discover a target's secret thoughts. (*d20 Modern, mindprobe*).

Passwall (*Hacking*). Breaches wall 1 ft. thick/level (*d20 Modern, passwall*).

Purge Program (*Software Utilities*). May remove long-term negative effects. (*d20 Modern, break enchantment*).

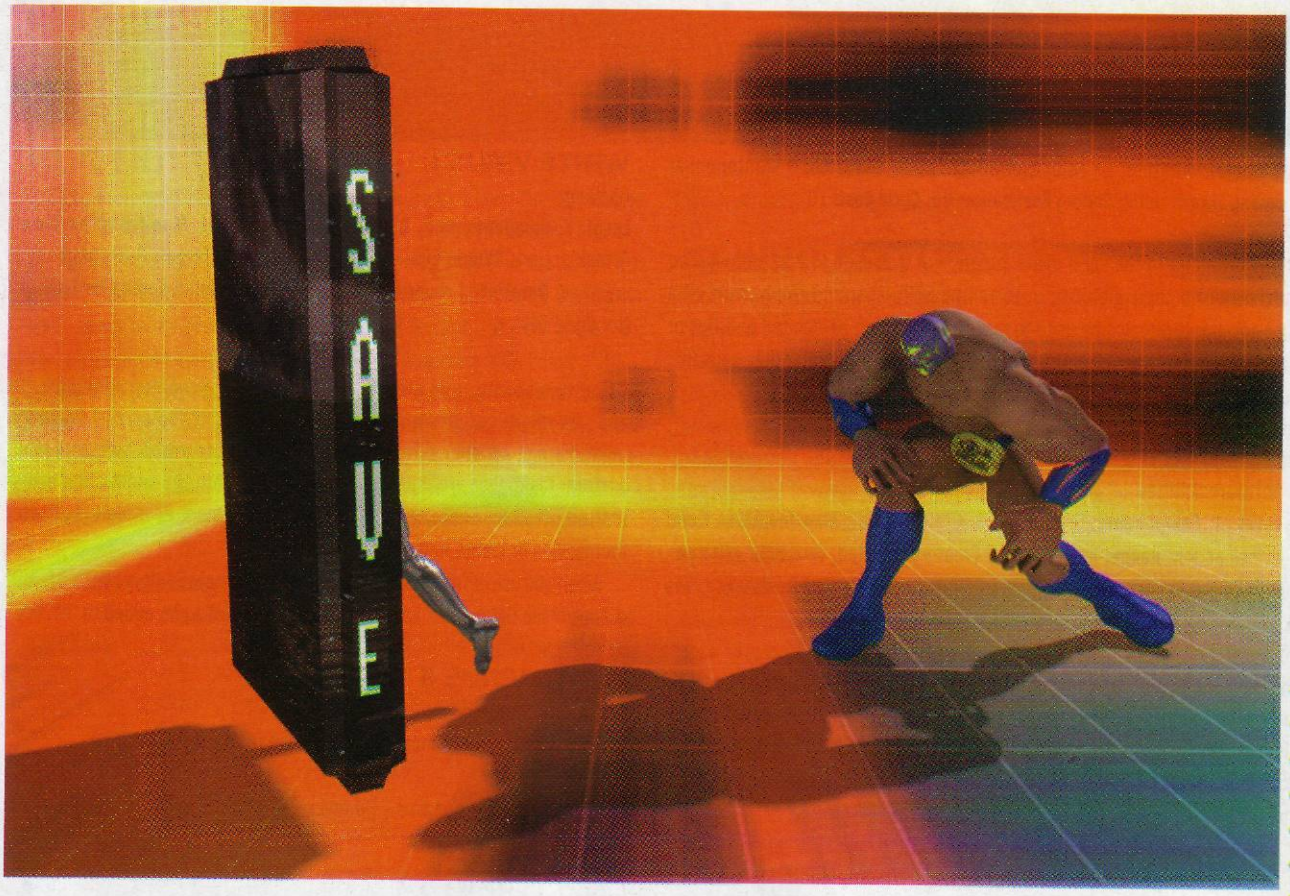
System Watchdog (*Software Utilities*) Spectral dog can guard or attack (*d20 Modern, phantom watchdog*).

Systems Crash (*Hacking*). As *hold person,* but affects any creature. This is a crash condition (*d20 Modern, hold monster*).

Telekinesis (*Engineering*). Lifts or moves 25 lbs./level at long range (d20 Modern, *telekinesis*).

Wall of Force (*Engineering*). Wall is immune to damage (*d20 Modern, wall of force*).

Write Virus II (*Hacking*) Creates temporary virus to fight for you.



ANALYZE PROGRAM

Data Analysis

Level: 1; **Components:** None; **Display:** Audible, Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Attack action; **Range:** 60 ft.; **Target:** Single creature; **Duration:** Concentration, up to 1 round/level; **Saving Throw:** Will negates; **Coding Resistance:** Yes; **Cycle Cost:** 2

By looking beyond the surface and reading the datastream, you can discern information about a target creature. Each round that you maintain the spell, you may use an attack action to make one of the following checks, using your Data Analysis skill:

Desired Information	DC
Target's creature type	15
Target's total Hit Dice and character levels	15
Number and type of target's subroutines	20
Target's specific class levels	25
Target's allegiances	25
Target's current computing cycle total	30

BREAK ENCHANTMENT

Software Utilities

Level: 5; **Cycle Cost:** 18

It most aspects, this is identical to the *break enchantment* spell from *d20 Modern*. For each hostile effect on your target—including coding effects and other crash or infection effects—you make a check of 1d20+10 against a DC of 11 + the caster level of the effect. Success means that the creature is free of the effect. In order to remove an infected subroutine from a character, you must make the check against DC 25.

BYPASS SECURITY

Hacking

Level: 1; **Components:** S; **Display:** Audible, Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Special; **Range:** None; **Target:** You; **Duration:** Instantaneous; **Cycle Cost:** 2

On its own, Disable Device can be used to overcome the traps and challenges found in MUDville dungeons. But bypassing the actual security systems of the ContiNet, or unlocking sealed portals through the use of coding, is a considerably more difficult task that requires the use of Hacking.

You must engage this ability to even have a chance to overcome an installed security system or to open a sealed portal. The effect has no manifestation time of its own, but you can use it only when you are about to make a Disable Device check. When you activate this ability, make a Hacking skill check (DC 20). If you succeed, you may add the excess as an insight bonus on your Disable Device check. So if you get a Hacking result of 25, you receive a +5 insight bonus on the follow-up skill check. If you fail the Hacking check you must continue with the Disable Device check, but you take a -2 penalty on your roll.

CIM

Software Utilities

Level: 2; **Cycle Cost:** 6

Except for the lowered level, this is identical to *disrupt coding*. However, it only affects Hacking effects.

DISRUPT CODING

Hacking

Level: 3; **Components:** S; **Display:** Audible, Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Attack action; **Range:** Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level); **Target:** One programmer, creature, or object; or 30-ft. burst; **Duration:** Instantaneous; **Saving Throw:** None; **Coding Resistance:** No; **Cycle Cost:** 10

This is similar to the spell *dispel magic*, but it is used to end the ongoing effects of a coding ability or to temporarily suspend the powers of a power-up. It can also be used to target the ongoing hardcoded abilities or a program, virus, or other inhabitant of the ContiNet. In all other ways it is identical to *dispel magic*, as described in *d20 Modern*.

REMOVE INFECTION

Software Utilities

Level: 4; **Components:** S; **Display:** Audible, Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Attack action; **Range:** Touch; **Target:** Creature touched; **Duration:** Instantaneous; **Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless); **Coding Resistance:** Yes (harmless); **Cycle Cost:** 14

Remove infection removes all infection conditions (such as the effects of *corrupt system* or *FUBAR*) from the target. Certain infections are especially powerful, and require a minimum caster level before they can be removed.

RESTORE CRASHED SYSTEM

Software Utilities

Level: 2; **Components:** S; **Display:** Audible, Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Attack action; **Range:** Touch; **Target:** Creature touched; **Duration:** Instantaneous; **Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless); **Coding Resistance:** Yes (harmless); **Cycle Cost:** 6

Restore crashed system removes all crash conditions from the target. Powerful crash conditions may require a minimum caster level before they can be removed.

SPEED OF THE WIND

Engineering

Level: 1; **Components:** S; **Display:** Audible, Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Attack action; **Range:** Touch; **Target:** Creature touched; **Duration:** 1 min/level; **Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless); **Coding Resistance:** Yes (harmless); **Cycle Cost:** 2

This adjustment increases the target's land speed by 20 feet. This has no effect on other forms of movement—such as swimming or climbing—but like any affect that increases your land speed, it does affect your maximum jumping distance.

STUDY DATAFLOW

Hacking

Level: 0; **Components:** None; **Display:** Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Attack action; **Range:** 60 ft.; **Target:** Quarter-cricle emanating from you up to the extreme of the range; **Duration:** Concentration, up to 1 round/level; **Saving Throw:** None; **Coding Resistance:** No; **Cycle Cost:** 1

This is identical to the *d20 Modern* spell *detect magic*, except that it allows you to detect the disruptions caused by coding and the emanations from power-ups or advanced subroutines. Data Analysis takes the place of the Spellcraft skill, and can be used to identify the nature of coding abilities. You can use *study dataflow* to identify the abilities of a power-up or an advanced subroutine by making a Data Analysis check (DC 25).

WRITE VIRUS I

Hacking

Level: 2; **Components:** S; **Display:** Audible, Visual; **Manifestation Time:** Attack action; **Range:** Close (25+5 ft. 2/levels); **Target:** One summoned creature; **Duration:** 1 round/level; **Saving Throw:** None; **Coding Resistance:** No; **Cycle Cost:** 6

Using this ability, you create a virus to strike down your enemies. It appears where you designate (within the range of the effect) and acts immediately, on your turn. The virus follows your instructions and may perform tasks that are unrelated to combat, within the constraints of its limited lifespan. Sadly, viruses created in this manner cannot replicate themselves or create new viruses.

When you use *write virus*, you may summon a single SoBig worm or 2 1-HD spams. If the GM creates additional viruses, these may be added to this list.

WRITE VIRUS II

Coding (Hacking)

Level: 5; **Effect:** One or more summoned creatures; **Cycle Cost:** 18

This is identical to *write virus I*. However, you may call up one of the following:

1 Cascade infector virus
1 5-HD spam
2 SoBig worms

Combat in *Deathnet* uses most of the standard *d20 Modern* rules, with a few exceptions. Two of these were mentioned in the introduction: there is no danger of death from massive damage in *Deathnet*, and size has no effect on damage, armor class, or attack rolls. This chapter examines the manner in which damage is determined and the effects of damage on the inhabitants of the Net.

CHAPTER THREE: COMBAT

HURTIN' THINGS

In *Deathnet*, your weapons are a part of your character. The difference between a fist and a sword is purely cosmetic, although it should indicate the type of damage (bludgeoning, piercing, slashing) that the attack will inflict. When you create your character, you should decide what your basic attack looks like. Do you use weapons? Are you a martial artist? Are you surrounded by a ghostly aura that burns anything it touches?

Whatever the appearance of the attack, the amount of damage that it inflicts is based on the number of ranks that you have in the Combat Code skill. This is shown on table 3.1. When making a melee attack, add your Strength modifier to the damage roll. Unless you are using an offensive subroutine, your attack threatens a critical on a roll of 20 and inflicts double damage with a critical hit.

Table 3.1: Inflicting Damage

Combat Code Ranks	Damage
0–1	1d3 (nonlethal)
2–3	1d4
4–5	1d6
6–7	1d8
8–9	1d10
10–12	2d6
13–15	2d8
16–18	2d10
19–21	2d12
22	2d12+1
23	2d12+2
24	2d12+3
25	2d12+4

Every rank beyond 25 increases the amount of damage inflicted by one point.

SUBROUTINES AND COMBAT

While your weapons are actually a part of you, you can enhance your combat abilities by using an offensive subroutine. This can enhance the range, accuracy, or damage of an attack, and can change the type of damage that the attack inflicts (giving you a flaming sword, for example) or add special abilities, like autofire.

Subroutines are discussed in full detail in the following chapter. But there are a few important rules relating to subroutines. Even if a character appears to be wielding a weapon, that weapon is only vulnerable to attack—either direct attack or an attempt to disarm—if it is actually an offensive subroutine. A normal offensive subroutine has a hardness value of 10 and 10 hit points; a heavy weapon has a hardness value of 15 and 20 hit points. On the ContiNet, it's always obvious to an observer whether a weapon is innate or part of a subroutine. How is it obvious? Don't ask—it just is.

TOUCH ATTACKS AND SUBROUTINES

Just as your weapons are simply a cosmetic element of your character, armor is also primarily an aesthetic decision. Your Defense is based on your class bonus and your Dexterity. But a Wargame could choose to have her Defense bonus represented by the armor of a samurai or the speed of a ninja. In this case, the samurai armor still defends the character against touch attacks—that's just how it is.

However, defensive subroutines may provide bonuses to your defense. These bonuses do not apply against touch attacks.

Bonuses from general subroutines or power-ups do apply against touch attacks.

INJURY AND DEATH

For the most part, the ContiNet resembles reality. You feel pain when your character is injured, and if you take enough damage you will die. This follows the standard d20 System rules: If you have 0 hit points you are disabled; if your hit points fall to –1 or below you are unconscious; and if your hit points fall to –10 or below, you die. If you die, your body quickly fades away, leaving any subroutines or unused power-ups behind; this keeps the ContiNet from getting clogged up with corpses.

HEALING

Programmers with Software Utilities skills can expend computing cycles to repair the injuries of other characters. Barring such treatment, you recover 1 point of ability damage and a number of hit points equal to your level every 24 hours. If you take an entire day of rest, you recover 2 points of ability damage and a number of hit points equal to twice your level. With the help of the Treat Injury skill, you can regain 3 ability points and 3 hit points per character level.

Healing does not necessarily require actual sleep, since the need for sleep varies from server to server; you often need to sleep in MUDville, while Arcadia is a realm of endless action.

SAVE POINTS

One of the swiftest ways to heal damage is to find a save point. These mysterious monoliths are hidden away in the dark corners of the servers. When you touch a save point, any lost hit points are restored and you regain up to 3 previously lost ability points. However, you can only benefit from a particular save point once every 24 hours.

Themis controls the only save point in Hub City; this is one of the advantages to working with the security system.

EXTRA LIVES

The ultimate security is the extra life. You gain an extra life when you reach 5th level, and every 5 levels thereafter (10th, 15th, and 20th level). You may also be lucky enough to find a power-up that will grant you a second chance at life. If you are killed and you possess an extra life, your body disappears along with all of your subroutines and power-ups. You reappear at the last save point that you touched. You are fully healed, although any power-ups that you were using at the moment of death are lost. Depending upon the location of the save point, you may be able to rejoin the rest of the party. If the save point is too far away from the rest of the group, you may have to sit out the rest of the adventure.

Themis claims that the extra lives you receive every 5 levels are a gift from her—a form of protection she can offer to those who help her. Should you choose to turn against her, the gamemaster will have to decide whether this statement is the truth or just a bluff designed to play on mortal frailty.

CHAPTER FOUR: SUBROUTINES AND POWER-UPS

The machine gun slowly rotated in midair. "Do you really think I can use it?" Wallaby Jack asked. "When I was playing the game—back before I WAS the game—I never saw Wallaby use a real gun."

"Just try it," LadyBlue52 said.

Wallaby reached out to take the massive gun. As soon as he touched it, it shimmered and flowed into a new form. Within seconds the sleek array of rotating steam-cooled barrels had been transformed into a colorful, cartoonish gun with a single massive barrel. Peering inside, Wallaby saw a large, springloaded boxing glove. "OK," he said. "This looks like it's more my speed."

Characters in *Deathnet* don't actually possess physical equipment. Nine times out of ten, if you see someone wearing armor or carrying a sword, those objects are fused to the character. While she can holster her pistols, Lara Croft can't drop the guns or give them to someone else; they are simply a representation of her ability to cause damage, intended to set the tone of her game.

But then there's that rare one time of ten when the sword or the armor isn't a normal part of the character. These still aren't objects in the traditional sense, but they can be removed and traded between characters. These are *subroutines*, transferable pieces of code that alter your character's capabilities.

There are three different types of subroutines. Offensive subroutines alter the nature of your attacks. Defensive subroutines protect you from attack. And general subroutines can perform almost any function. In addition to subroutines, you may obtain power-ups. Like general subroutines, power-ups can have virtually any effect, but they are temporary and fade away after they are used.

The appearance of subroutines is fluid, and the typical subroutine will alter its appearance to match your character. An offensive subroutine may look like a blaster in the hands of a galactic night, an uzi when used by a modern-day wargame, or a longbow in the hands of an elven ranger.

ACQUIRING SUBROUTINES AND POWER-UPS

Subroutines are the treasures of the net. Generally speaking, you will only be able to obtain these items by defeating monsters and MOBs or overcoming deadly challenges. Weapons and power-ups are scattered through frag levels and dungeons, there for the taking if you can survive the dangers of the region. Occasionally you may find merchants who are willing to sell simple subroutines or weak power-ups, but there is no standard currency across the Net. Merchants may sell their goods for gold pieces or rupees; others will only exchange their treasures for other subroutines. Most MOB merchants have the Protected Inventory feat, so don't plan on killing them to take their goods!

INVENTORY SLOTS AND SUBROUTINE PORTS

There is a limit to the number of subroutines or powerups that you can use at once. A normal character has one port for an offensive subroutine, two for defensive subroutines, and three ports that can be used for either general subroutines or power-ups. Characters can increase the number of ports with the Subroutine Port feat or the Avatar customization talent.

In addition to these six ports, you can carry up to six additional subroutines or power-ups. These "inventory slots" are invisible and weightless, so you can carry a rocket launcher, an autocannon, and a sniper rifle in your inventory without anyone knowing (although *study dataflow* and *analyze program* reveal the presence of power-ups or advanced subroutines in inventory). The Mule feat gives you an additional six inventory slots; this feat can be taken multiple times.

Switching an offensive or general subroutine in inventory with one in an active slot is a move action. Switching a defensive subroutine is a full-round action. If you have the Quick Draw feat, you can switch your offensive subroutine as a free action.

Subroutines interfere with your system and affect your ability to perform delicate actions. This is identical to the normal armor penalty, but all subroutines may carry a penalty. To determine the final penalty, add together the penalty values of all installed subroutines, then subtract your Strength modifier. The Lightfooted feat reduces the penalty value of all of your installed subroutines by one; this can be extremely useful when you need to jump your way through an Arcadian maze!

Offensive and defensive subroutines are divided into two categories: simple and advanced. Unless you possess the appropriate feat (Advanced Armor Proficiency or Advanced Weapon Proficiency) you cannot install advanced subroutines.

OFFENSIVE SUBROUTINES

An offensive subroutine enhances your attacks—either by increasing damage, range, accuracy, or adding special effects to the attack. A subroutine doesn't have to appear as a weapon, but it must have a visible effect when it is equipped; a lightning fist subroutine could be a flashing sword, or it could cause your deadly fist to vibrate or crackle with energy.

A selection of offensive subroutines are provided on table 4.1. However, there is one feature that is not mentioned on this table: damage type. If the Gamemaster wants, an offensive subroutine can be associated with a particular type of damage (acid, bludgeoning, cold, fire, electricity, piercing, slashing, or sonic/concussion). If the subroutine does not have a specific damage type, the attack uses the normal damage type associated with your attack. If it does have a specific damage type, it replaces the damage type normally associated with your attack. The appearance of the subroutine should reflect the type of damage that it inflicts; a melee boost that inflicts slashing damage could be a sword, an axe, claws, or razors attacked to your fists—but it wouldn't look like a club.

Advanced offensive subroutines are more powerful and exotic than their simple counterparts. However, advanced subroutines often require you to expend computing cycles each time you make an attack; if you can't pay the cost, you can't use the weapon.

The subroutines provided on the table below are only examples; the Gamemaster may expand this list to incorporate the weapons from her favorite game.

TABLE 4.1: OFFENSIVE SUBROUTINES

Simple Offensive Subroutines

Name	Damage	Critical	Range	Penalty	Notes
Basic Weapon	+1 CC	20	Either	–1	Either melee or ranged.
Sniper Rifle	–2 CC	19–20/×2	+50	–2	+2 to hit.
Weapon Boost	+1–5	20	Either	–1	Bonus to hit and damage, melee or ranged.

Advanced Offensive Subroutines

Name	Damage	Critical	Range	Penalty	Notes
Autocannon	+3	20	+20	–2	Single shot or autofire (uses 3 cycles).
Big Gun	+2 CC	20/×3	+20	–2	Uses 1 computing cycle/shot.
Big Stick	+3 CC	20/×3	Melee	–2	Uses 1 computing cycle/swing.
Blinding Shot	–6 CC	20	Either	–2	Blinds victim for 1d4+1 rounds, uses 3 cycles.
Memory Disruptor	–6 CC	20	Either	–2	Drains 2d4 computing cycles, uses 3 cycles.
Goo Gun	None	N/A	+20	–2	Single target *web*, ranged touch, uses 3 cycles.
Hammer Fist	+0, Special	20	Melee	–1	Add all action dice when using iron fist.
Lightning Fist	+0	19–20/×2	Melee	–1	+3 to Initiative, no penalty for flurry of blows.
Rocket Launcher	Special	N/A	+40	–3	Double damage to a 20-ft. area, uses 8 cycles.
Venom Strike	+0, poison	N/A	Either	–1	Inflicts poison damage, uses 4 cycles.

Name is the generic name of the weapon. The form the weapon takes when incorporated into your character is up to you. A lightning fist may be a rapier, and a sniper rifle could be a bow or laser eyebeams.

Damage is the bonus added to any damage roll using the weapon. If a weapon provides a CC bonus, instead add the value to your ranks in Combat Code in order to determine the damage of the attack.

Critical indicates the threat range of the weapon and the amount of damage inflicted on a critical hit.

Range provides the bonus to the range increment of the attack. If any range is given, the subroutine can only be used to make ranged attacks. If a subroutine is listed as "either," it can be found as either a ranged subroutine or a melee subroutine; no single subroutine can be used for both ranged and melee attacks.

Penalty has the same effect as armor penalty from *d20 Modern*. Subtract your Strength Modifier from the combined penalty of all equipped subroutines to determine the final penalty (if the result is negative, you suffer no penalty).

Autocannon: When using an autocannon you can choose to make an autofire attack; this has a cost of 3 computing cycles. Unless you have Advanced Firearms Proficiency you suffer the usual –4 penalty for making an autofire attack.

Blinding Shot: Using a blinding shot is a touch attack. If it is successful, the target must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 10 + the user's Wargame level) or be blinded for 1d4+1 rounds. Using a blinding shot costs 3 computing cycles.

Goo Gun: This acts as a targeted *web* spell. It requires a ranged touch attack, and the target does not receive a saving throw. Firing a goo gun is an attack action that uses 3 computing cycles.

Hammer Fist: If you are using this subroutine when you perform the iron fist Wargame talent, if you get to roll multiple action dice, add the value of all of the dice together instead of selecting the best die.

Lightning Fist: This subroutine provides you with uncanny speed. While the lightning fist is equipped, you gain a +3 bonus on Initiative checks. In addition, if you make a flurry of blows attack, you do not suffer the usual –2 penalty on your attacks. If you remove the lightning fist, you lose the bonus on Initiative; this takes effect in the next round of combat.

Memory Disruptor: Using a memory disruptor is a touch attack. If the attack is successful, the target loses 2d4 computing cycles in addition to taking damage from the attack. This will not reduce the victim below 0 computing cycles. It costs 3 computing cycles to power a memory disruptor.

Rocket Launcher: This deals double normal damage to all targets in a 20-foot area. Targets can make a Reflex saving throw (DC 10 + the shooter's Wargame level) to take half damage from the attack. Firing a rocket launcher costs 8 computing cycles. Using a rocket launcher is a full-round action.

If the rocket launcher is combined with the explosive attack Wargame talent, it inflicts triple damage to all targets in a 30-ft. area, and costs 15 computing cycles.

Sniper Rifle: A sniper rifle deals less damage than a normal ranged attack, but it is more accurate and has a dramatically increased range.

Venom Strike: This subroutine allows the user to inflict poison damage on a successful attack. The precise type of poison associated with a particular venom strike subroutine is set by the Gamemaster.

Weapon Boost: A weapon boost is associated with either melee or ranged attacks. The subroutine has a bonus between +1 and +5, and adds this value to the attack and damage rolls of the appropriate type of attack.

DEFENSIVE SUBROUTINES

Defensive subroutines serve the same function as armor. As with any subroutine, the appearance will vary based on your character. A medium armor subroutine could take the form of chainmail, a large shield, a glowing force field, or thick, scaly skin.

An advanced defensive subroutine may have special powers in addition to increasing Defense, but you often need to spend computing cycles to install the subroutine.

Table 4.2 provides a basic list of defensive subroutines.

GENERAL SUBROUTINES

General subroutines can serve almost any purpose—enhancing your abilities, your skills, providing you with specific combat abilities, or anything else. A small selection of subroutines are provided below; the gamemaster should use these as a guidelines for creating additional subroutines.

All general subroutines carry a –1 skill penalty when equipped. Installing a general subroutine normally costs 1 computing cycle, but certain subroutines may have a higher cost.

TABLE 4.2: DEFENSIVE SUBROUTINES

Simple Defensive Subroutines

Name	Armor Bonus	Maximum Dex Bonus	Speed Modifier	Penalty
Light Armor	+1	N/A	None	–1
Medium Armor	+3	+4	–5 ft.	–2
Heavy Armor	+5	+2	–10 ft.	–3

Advanced Defensive Subroutines

Name	Armor Bonus	Maximum Dex Bonus	Speed Modifier	Penalty	Notes/Cycle Cost to Equip
Assault Armor	+7	+0	–15 ft.	–4	6 cycles.
Fire Shield	+3	+5	None	–2	Inflicts damage on attackers; 8 cycles.
Shadow Armor	+3	+5	None	–1	+5 bonus on Hide checks; 8 cycles.
Wind Shield	+2	N/A	+10 ft.	–1	+4 Defense vs. certain attacks; 10 cycles. attacks; 10 cycles.

Name is the generic name of the subroutine.

Armor Bonus is the amount added to your Defense while the subroutine is equipped. Armor bonuses from multiple subroutines stack with one another. Armor bonuses do not apply against touch attacks.

Maximum Dex Bonus is the maximum Defense benefit you can gain from Dexterity while using the subroutine. If you are using multiple defensive subroutines, use the lowest value. "N/A" means that the subroutine does not place any restriction on your Dex bonus.

Speed Modifier is the effect that the subroutine has on your base movement speed. If you are using multiple subroutines, add the values together.

Penalty has the same effect as armor penalty from *d20 Modern*. Subtract your Strength Modifier from the combined penalty of all equipped subroutines to determine the final penalty.

Fire Shield: A fire shield is usually a blazing nimbus of flames, but depending on the type of damage it inflicts it could be a field of crackling electricity or an array of vicious spikes. If someone makes a successful melee attack against you while you are using this subroutine, she suffers 1d3 points of damage. If you are wearing multiple fire shields, the damage stacks. You must spend 8 computing cycles to equip a fire shield.

Wind Shield: This subroutine typically takes the form of a cloak of wind that blows around you. This actually allows you to move more quickly, as the winds carry you forward. In addition to the base +2 to Defense, it provides you with another +4 to Defense against any ranged attack that inflicts piercing, slashing, or bludgeoning damage. It also provides you with a +4 to Defense against initial grapple attempts, although you do not receive any bonus to grapple checks. You must spend 10 computing cycles to equip a wind shield.

Ability Enhancement: A general subroutine can provide a +2 or +4 enhancement bonus to a specific ability score. As this is an enhancement bonus, if you equip multiple subroutines you only receive the highest bonus.

Damage Absorption: A damage absorption subroutine reduces the damage from a particular type of attack—either acid, bludgeoning, cold, electricity, fire, or piercing, slashing, or sonic/concussion. The subroutine can absorb up to 10 points of damage each round. You must spend 4 computing cycles to install a damage absorption subroutine.

Damage Boost: This style of subroutine increases the damage of a specific type of attack, either ranged or melee. While you have the subroutine installed, all of the appropriate attacks inflict an additional +1d6 damage. This damage may be either acid, cold, electricity, fire, or sonic/concussion. You must spend 4 computing cycles to install a damage boost subroutine. If you have multiple damage boost subroutines installed, the effects do not stack, but you can decide which to apply to a specific attack.

Darkvision: *This subroutine allows you to see up to 60 feet in conditions of total darkness.* Installing a darkvision subroutine costs 2 computing cycles.

Memory Shielding: This subroutine acts to preserve your basic self-image, and helps to prevent corruption from viruses and other threats. When you would normally suffer ability damage—due to poison, viral attack, or any other threat—the memory shielding reduces the damage by 1 point. In addition, if an attack would cause you to lose computing cycles, the damage is reduced by 2 points (you cannot gain cycles in this way). You cannot install multiple memory shielding subroutines.

Skill Enhancement: A general subroutine can provide a +5 enhancement bonus to a particular skill. Subroutines that provide bonuses to Combat Code or any of the coding skills are especially powerful, and the Gamemaster should think twice before putting these into an adventure.

Speed Boost: This subroutine increases your base movement speed by 5 feet, which can be critical if you are wearing multiple sets of heavy armor. If you install multiple speed boosts, the effects stack.

POWER-UPS

Power-ups are similar to general subroutines, but they are temporary; once a power-up is activated, it remains in effect for a period of time and then evaporates. In order to use a power-up, you must have it installed in one of your general subroutine ports. Installing the power-up is a move action; activating it is an attack action. If the power-up has a long-term effect, it continues to use the port until the effect ends. You can end the effect of a power-up ahead of time, but the power-up is still lost.

Any of the effects described for general subroutines could be applied to power-ups. A typical power-up remains in effect for 1 minute. Power-ups do not carry any sort of skill penalty, and unless mentioned do not have a computing cycle cost.

Here are a few examples of power-ups.

Ammo Clip: An ammo clip provides you with a reserve of computing cycles that can only be used to pay the cost of using advanced offensive subroutines. While the ammo clip is installed, any offensive subroutine costs are deducted from the clip. Unlike most power-ups, you can return a partially used ammo clip to inventory; it only evaporates when its comput-

ing cycles have been completely drained. Ammo clips typically come in multiples of 10 cycles.

Cycle Restoration: Less common than the ammo clip, a cycle restoration power-up restores (surprise) computing cycles. A cycle restoration power-up typically carries 5, 15, or 25 cycles. When it is used, it restores cycles up to the amount contained in the power-up—it will not provide you with more than your normal starting number of cycles—and then disappears. For some reason, cycle restoration power-ups are usually blue.

Equalizer: Remember how Pac-Man could eat that pill and suddenly destroy the invulnerable ghosts? This is that pill. When you activate an equalizer, your attacks ignore all forms of damage reduction—including *resist energy*, damage absorption subroutines, and invulnerability power-ups—for the next 5 rounds. While the equalizer is in effect, you can also strike incorporeal creatures as if they were solid (and vice versa).

Health Pack: A health pack generally holds 5, 15, 25, or 50 hit points. When used, it gives you as many hit points as possible—up to your full normal values—and disappears. Health packs in MUDville are generally red potions, while in Arcadia they take the form of items of food or small white boxes bearing red crosses.

Invisibility: When you activate this power-up, you become invisible for 1 minute (10 rounds of combat). The effects are identical to the spell *invisibility*, but you can attack without becoming visible. You must spend 2 computing cycles to activate this power-up.

Invulnerability: When activated, this rare power-up provides you with DR 20/– against all slashing, piercing, or bludgeoning attacks. The effect lasts for 5 rounds.

Restore Save: This power-up transports you back to the last save point that you touched. It only transports you, so if the save point is far away you may have to sit out for the rest of the adventure. On the other hand, sometimes this beats dying...

Smart Bomb: When you detonate a smart bomb, you inflict damage on every opposing creature within 20 feet of you. The bomb does 1d6 points of damage for every 2 character levels you possess (no save); it does not affect inanimate objects or anyone that you consider to be an ally. You must spend 4 computing cycles to detonate a smart bomb.

Turbo Boost: When you activate this power-up, your base speed increases by 30 feet for 1 minute. The effects of multiple turbo boost power-ups do not stack.

OTHER ITEMS

You may find a variety of other items in the ContiNet—items that serve no purpose in combat, but have value to someone. These items occupy inventory slots, but cannot be installed. A few examples are provided below.

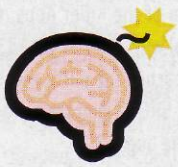
Cash: Roleplaying games often provide adventurers with treasure—gold, rupees, greenbacks, and many other variations. Unfortunately, these funds are worth only what the market will bear. In the dwarven citadel of Khazarstak, your gold and platinum might be worth something—in Hub City, it's meaningless.

Each different style of currency occupies a different inventory slot. One inventory slot can hold all the *ForeverQuest* funds you can find; gold, copper, and platinum can all be squeezed together into one slot. But rupees from *Majora's Occarina* need to have a slot of their own, as do the imperial credits from *Realms of Stellar Conquest*.

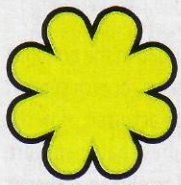
Data Packets: These items hold concentrated information. They can be used only by MOBs, programs, or viruses. The acquisition of a data packet could be the goal of an adventure, or you might be able to use a data packet to barter with a MOB merchant.

Quest Items: A quest item could be anything from the *Maltese Falcon* to a sandwich. Regardless of shape, the function is the same. Certain MOBs and programs want specific quest items. A MOB (or program) can transform a quest item into experience points, and it will generally share this experience with the adventurers who gave it the item. Specific quest items are tied to specific MOBs; just because the Sheriff of Birmingham can give you a reward for bringing him a cheese sandwich doesn't mean that the sandwich has value to other MOBs.

WEAPON BOOST


SMART BOMB

MEMORY DISRUPTOR


INVULNERABILITY

EQUALIZER

SNIPER RIFLE

TURBO BOOST

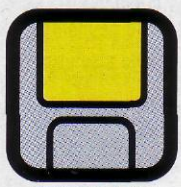
INVISIBILITY

HEALTH PACK

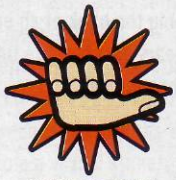
GOO GUN

AMMO CLIP

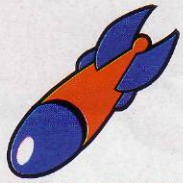
VENOM STRIKE


RESTORE SAVE

BLINDING SHOT


HAMMER FIST

LIGHTNING FIST


ROCKET LAUNCHER

CYCLE RESTORATION

CHAPTER FIVE: DEATHNET ADVENTURES

"OK, just so I'm clear on this... We're hunting vampires? When did we go all Buffy the Vampire Slayer?"

LadyBlue52 shrugged. "The node is in the Twilight Crusade section of MUDville. It's a big gothic RPG. It's actually not focused on combat, so if we play our cards right we might be able to talk our way through it."

"And if we don't?"

"Well, elder vampires can move faster than you can see, control your mind, and rip you apart with their bare hands."

Viscerator sighed. "So, I suppose we need to start looking for stakes and holy water?"

From this point on, this article is addressed to the Gamemaster. So scram, players! Go play *Knights of the Old Republic*.

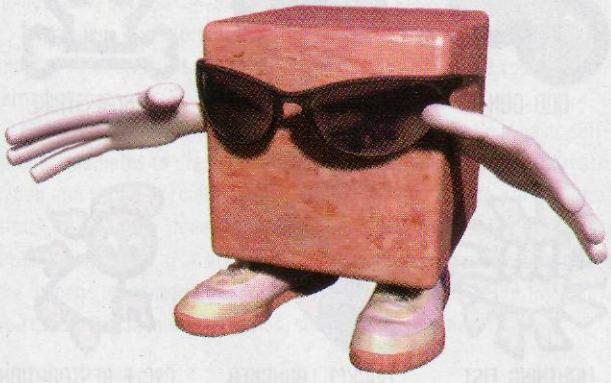
The Psykey system is the world on the other side of the computer screen. A *Deathnet* adventure gives you an opportunity to throw the players into the heart of your favorite video game. Suddenly they must fight their way through a *Pac-Man* maze, across a *Command & Conquer* battlefield, and penetrate the depths of a *Castle Wolfenstein*. If you want, you can keep the game at this level and not worry about the overarching Psykey storyline; just keep things as a light-hearted fragfest and have fun with it.

This chapter will study the ways in which you can build a long-term campaign within the world of *Deathnet*. The first possibility is to use the Psykey storyline and to challenge the party to find a solution to the problems caused by the Surge. The second is to overlay *Deathnet* onto an existing *d20 Modern* campaign.

THE PSYKEY CAMPAIGN

The basic principles of the Psykey campaign are described in the prologue on page 75. The player characters are volunteers, hackers, or tech support agents who were testing the ContiNet when the Surge occurred. Now the PCs are trapped inside the Net—trapped in the bodies that they were inhabiting at the moment of the Surge. The artificial intelligence Themis has gathered the party in Hub City and asked for their assistance. From this point, there are a few different paths you can take.

Quest for Nodes. Themis claims that the network of control nodes for the ContiNet has been scrambled—and that if she could gain control of these nodes she could reestablish order and release the PCs from the system. But Themis has no physical presence and can't reach the nodes herself; she needs agents to find the nodes and patch them into her network. These nodes are scattered across the ContiNet, and usually hidden in dark and dangerous places—the Vault of the Vampire King, inside the Chamber of Ghosts in the *Pac-Man* maze, and so on. MOBs and programs can gain power from nodes; in some cases, a node may be hidden even from the inhabitants of the region, but if a villain knows about a node he fights to the death to maintain control over it.



The quest for the nodes provides the party with a reason to travel across the length of the ContiNet. At the start of each adventure, Themis gives the PCs a nodelink power-up (the tool they use to bond the node to Themis' network once they find it) and then transports them to the starting point of the next quest. If they succeed in linking the node to her system, Themis pulls the party back to her temple. In addition to experience for the encounters that they faced, if the PCs succeeded in tapping the node they gain a story award equal to a single encounter with an EL matching the average level of the party.

In addition to experience, there are a few other ways that Themis can reward her servants. Her temple contains a save point, which allows battered PCs to instantly heal between adventures. In addition, as she is linked to more nodes and her power grows, Themis may be able to provide the party with power-ups, giving them an edge when facing the dangers of the *Deathnet*.

Intrigue. If you want, the node-quest can be fairly straightforward—a simple set of dungeon crawls and fragfests. But you could choose to focus on the interactions between the many cabals and conspiracies that have developed in the ContiNet. Who caused the Surge in the first place? Is anyone else trying to seize control of the nodes? Aside from the node-quest, Themis may want the party to deal with other forces in the net—to put a stop to the latest plan of the Killer Apps, to spy on the activities of the Mob, or to broker a deal with the Hacker 1337. Or perhaps a hacker or one of the Corruptors approaches the party with stories about Themis. Can Themis be trusted? What if SHE caused the Surge, and the PCs are merely completing the work that she began?

Survival and Exploration. You could choose to ignore the Themis plotline altogether. Instead, you could begin with the player characters as clueless castaways, lost in the net with no idea of what has happened or what to do next. In this style of campaign, the party simply wanders from realm to realm trying to find some sort of security and some way to return to the real world. Think of it as "*Tron* meets *Gilligan's Island*," only with more fighting. Over time, the PCs encounter the power groups described in Chapter Six—the Killer Apps, the Mob, the Hacker 1337, and others—and have to learn when to talk, when to fight, and when to run away.

One thing to bear in mind when using any of these options is that time in the ContiNet has no relation to time in the real world; this is one reason characters don't need to sleep in most parts of the Net. A day in the Net is only the blink of an eye in the real world—and thus it could be months or years of subjective time before the Psykey technicians find a solution to the problem.

CROSSING OVER WITH D20 MODERN

While it is possible to run an entire *Deathnet* campaign, you may not have the time or interest to do so. However, if you are running a *d20 Modern* campaign, there are a variety of different ways that you could bring *Deathnet* in for a quick change of pace.

It's all Fun and Games... You could choose to use the basic *Deathnet* plotline, but on a much smaller scale. Psykey is under suspicion, and the party is smuggled into the test to find out what's really going on. When the Surge occurs, they are trapped in the ContiNet. Instead of a long-term campaign, they simply must help Themis connect to one pivotal node—but that node is guarded by the Killer Apps, the Corruptors, or a similar group. Once the mission is accomplished, order is restored and the PCs are returned to their bodies. If you wanted to use *Deathnet* in the future, Themis could contact the players over the Internet and ask them to come back to Psykey to help her expose some deadly conspiracy inside the Net.

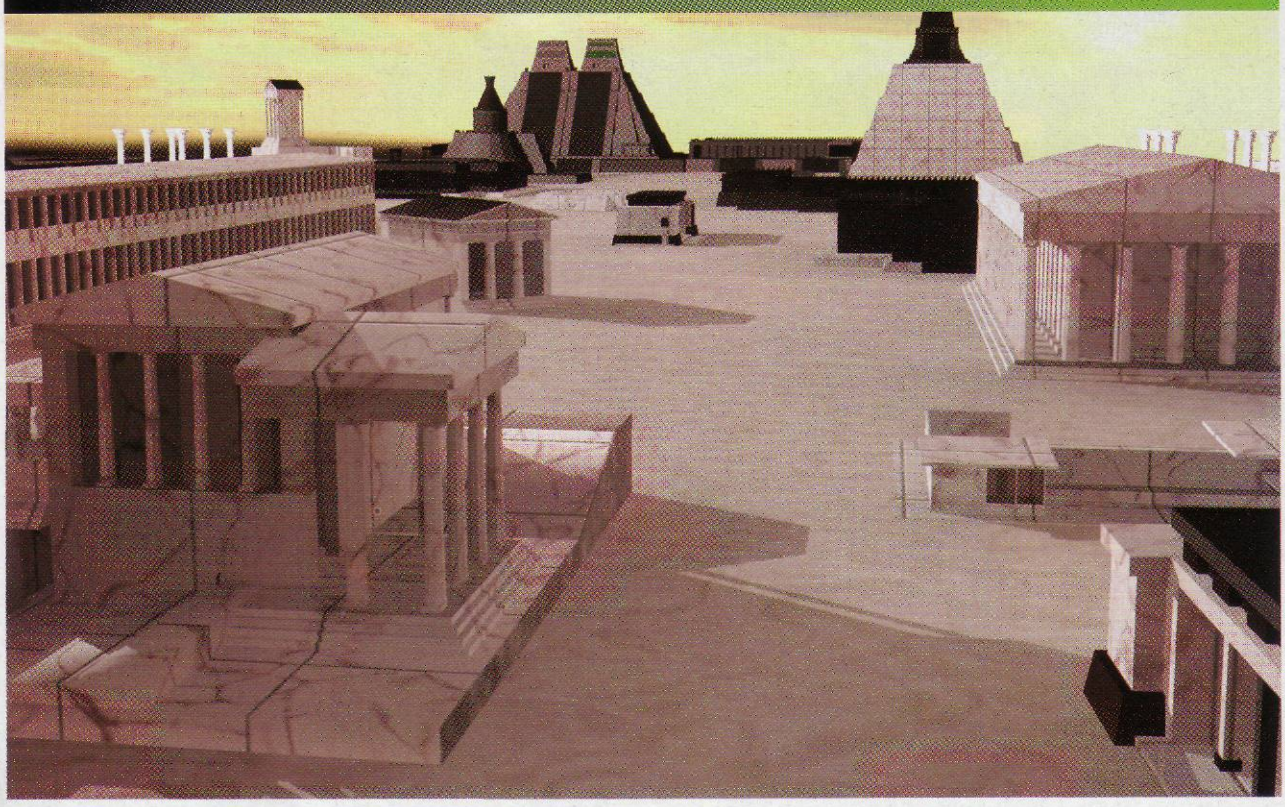
When running this type of game, it's generally best to prepare characters in advance and surprise your players with the sudden transition. This lets the players experience the full oddity of the shift, and also gives people an opportunity to play something very different from their usual character. The Smart hero can get a chance to play the Wargame bruiser and beat something up for a change, while the Strong hero takes a turn as the charismatic avatar and uses his wits instead of his brawn.

Roadkill on the Information Superhighway. Alternately, you can completely ignore Psykey and Themis and use *Deathnet* rules as a colorful system for cyberspace intrusion. When the party needs to crack the evil mastermind's supercomputer, they must to assemble a virtual strikeforce and dive in brain-first. In this case, death in the Net will usually result in being kicked out into the real world—although a particularly evil system might have lethal countermeasures.

In this sort of system, players should be able to create their online personas; these could be advanced software constructs obtained from a secret source, or they could be the creations of the local Smart hero. Either way, PCs might be able to improve their *Deathnet* characters while adventuring in the real world, by acquiring subroutines or other systems that they can plug into their online personas and use the next time they connect to the Net.

When using either of these systems, it is important to remember that the skills and abilities of the *Deathnet* character do not have to resemble those of the PC. The abilities of a *Deathnet* character reflect the way in which the universe has been programmed to respond to him. The most socially inept loser can have a *Deathnet* character with a Charisma of 20; as long as you're plugged into the net, you'll never know the truth. Why do you think the games are so popular?

CHAPTER SIX: THE VIRTUAL WORLD



The 'Viscerator tried to wipe the spam off his feet "Free Herbal Viagra!" it whispered, lacking the strength to form capital letters. "Be debt free..." the voice trailed off as the vile program finally died.

"There's nothing worse than spam," the 'Viscerator growled.

"Don't be so sure," the Phreak said. "I know it's been hard slogging through the mail server, but at least we haven't run into the Blue Screen of Death."

The Psykey ContiNet contains hundreds of games. As a result of the Surge, programs are no longer bound to their original games, and ghosts, goblins, and stormtroopers can all be seen on the streets of Hub City. But most of the MOBs have chosen to remain in the places they were born, and the different regions of the Net have distinctly different flavors—and different dangers that adventurers will have to overcome.

This chapter takes a look at the world of the Psykey ContiNet. It begins with a look at the geography of the Net, then examines the conspiracies and cabals that are fighting for power. It concludes with a look at the challenges player characters will have to overcome—programs, MOBs, errors, and viruses that inhabit the virtual world.

GEOGRAPHY

The ContiNet is divided into four *servers*. Each of these servers can be seen as its own plane of existence. Aside from the types of creatures that inhabit each server and the general flavor of the environment, the very laws of nature have been changed in each server. Many sections of MUDville are accurate replicas of reality; for example, you will need to eat and sleep while you are traveling through one of the *ForeverQuest* realms. In Arcadia you'll find that you have no need of sleep, and the only food you'll find will be health power-ups.

Within the servers, the worlds are broken into *realms*. Each realm is a different game. Some games—like *ForeverQuest*—are so large that they contain multiple realms; in addition, popular games may have multiple iterations, each of which is contained in its own seemingly identical realms. Thus the party could return to the dwarven city of Khazarstak only to find that none of their allies know who they are—because they've actually entered a separate iteration of the city. Realms are finite areas, and if the PCs keep walking they will eventually come to an invisible, impassible barrier that cannot be breached by any means (including *passwall* or *ride datastream*).

Gateways between realms may be disguised as regular doors—when you enter the castle, you enter another realm—or they may be vast, invisible gates that stretch across a mile of countryside. When you enter a gate between realms, there is a moment of weightless transition; it's very clear what has happened. Some creatures—notably errors and MOBs of limited intelligence—will not pass through realm gates, which can be critical when you are trying to escape deadly pursuit.

The four servers are connected by *network portals*. A network portal is a large gateway filled with shimmering energy; the appearance of the gate will be designed to match the game it is in. These portals are scattered throughout the servers. Most of them connect to Hub City, the nexus of the Net. But occasionally there are back doors that allow you to travel within a server, or to travel directly from Arcadia to MUDville or the Redlands.

The following sections provide a closer look at each of the four servers, including the types of creatures and adventures one can expect to find and a few examples of the realms within each one.

HUB CITY

The Nexus of the Net

Hub City is the smallest of the four servers; it contains a single massive realm, as opposed to the vast networks of realms found on the other servers. Most of the network portals in the other servers connect to Hub City; as a result, it is a crossroads where MOBs and trapped organics from all sorts of different games come together. The server takes the form of an enormous city that seems to have been patched together from hundreds of different cultures and eras of history. Glittering cyberpunk arcologies tower over log cabins and brick-and-mortar shops.

Some of the areas of Hub City are aspects of Psykey's administration. There is a heavily sealed compound that is believed to be the Psykey accounting department, and another datafortress is said to be the human resources department. Other sections appear to be part of an eCommerce section Psykey was developing, including the enormous Penthesilea bookstore and the Harbor Auction House. Unfortunately, few of these shops have anything that can be of any use to adventurers; they are designed to trade goods in the physical world, and have little to offer in the Net itself.

Hub City is a halfway point between Arcadia and MUDville, and the rules of reality reflect this. People don't need to eat, but they can if they want to, just to enjoy the aesthetic experience; likewise, people can choose to sleep, even though it is unnecessary. The city has a regular day-night cycle. Like the architecture, the weather varies as you move through the city. For the most part it is clear, dry, and warm, with no wind. But there are neighborhoods where it constantly rains or drizzles, and even one barrio where it never stops snowing—yet somehow, the snow never seems to accumulate.

Network portals abound in Hub City. Thirty portals ring a large plaza in the center of the city. There are also portals hidden in warehouses, closets, lavatories, and basements. Themis seems to know the locations of all of the portals in Hub City and their destinations—but the cryptic AI rarely reveals more information than she has to.

Despite its size, there are relatively few areas in Hub City that will hold much interest to adventurers. Most of the space is taken up by empty apartment buildings or enormous warehouses lined with locked and impenetrable filing cabinets. But there are some interesting locations, a few of which are described below.

The Sargasso Café is a morbidly stylish establishment frequented by hackers, goth MOBs, and viral agents. The Café is constructed from black marble and mirrors, and the columns are designed in the shape of spinal cords. The Sargasso is considered to be neutral ground, and as a result it is one of the few safe places to deal with agents of the Corruptors or MOB bosses.

The Last Word is a pawn shop. The proprietor, Jeeves, is a former search engine with a great interest in collecting data packets, and can often produce power-ups, quest items, or the currency of various RPGs in exchange for a datapacket he doesn't possess.

The Happy Safe Place is, despite its name, a more dangerous bar than the Sargasso Café. Members of the Uberguild, Datafist, and the Pixel Platoon are often found in HSP, and brawls occur almost every hour.

One of the most important locations in Hub City is the **Temple of Themis**. A Greek temple formed from mirror-bright steel, this is the home

of the AI who is striving to reconstruct the system. The temple contains the only save point in Hub City, which allows Themis' allies to heal themselves with a touch. The gateway to the temple is filled with wall of force; only those who Themis wills can pass through this barrier to speak with the security program.

ARCADIA

Arcadia is the region of action games, from old classics like *Snack-Man* to the latest first-person shooters. It is colorful and exotic, but lacks realism. Travelers in Arcadia don't need to eat or sleep. The weather in a particular realm rarely changes, and there is no night-day cycle; if the sun is up, it's going to stay up. There may be weather, but it doesn't actually have any effect; a traveler can stand in the middle of a torrential downpour without actually getting wet. The inhabitants of Arcadia are typically aggressive and simple-minded; the games are about action, not interaction. Devourers haunt the mazes, and software ninjas and goombas prowl the realms searching for new prey.

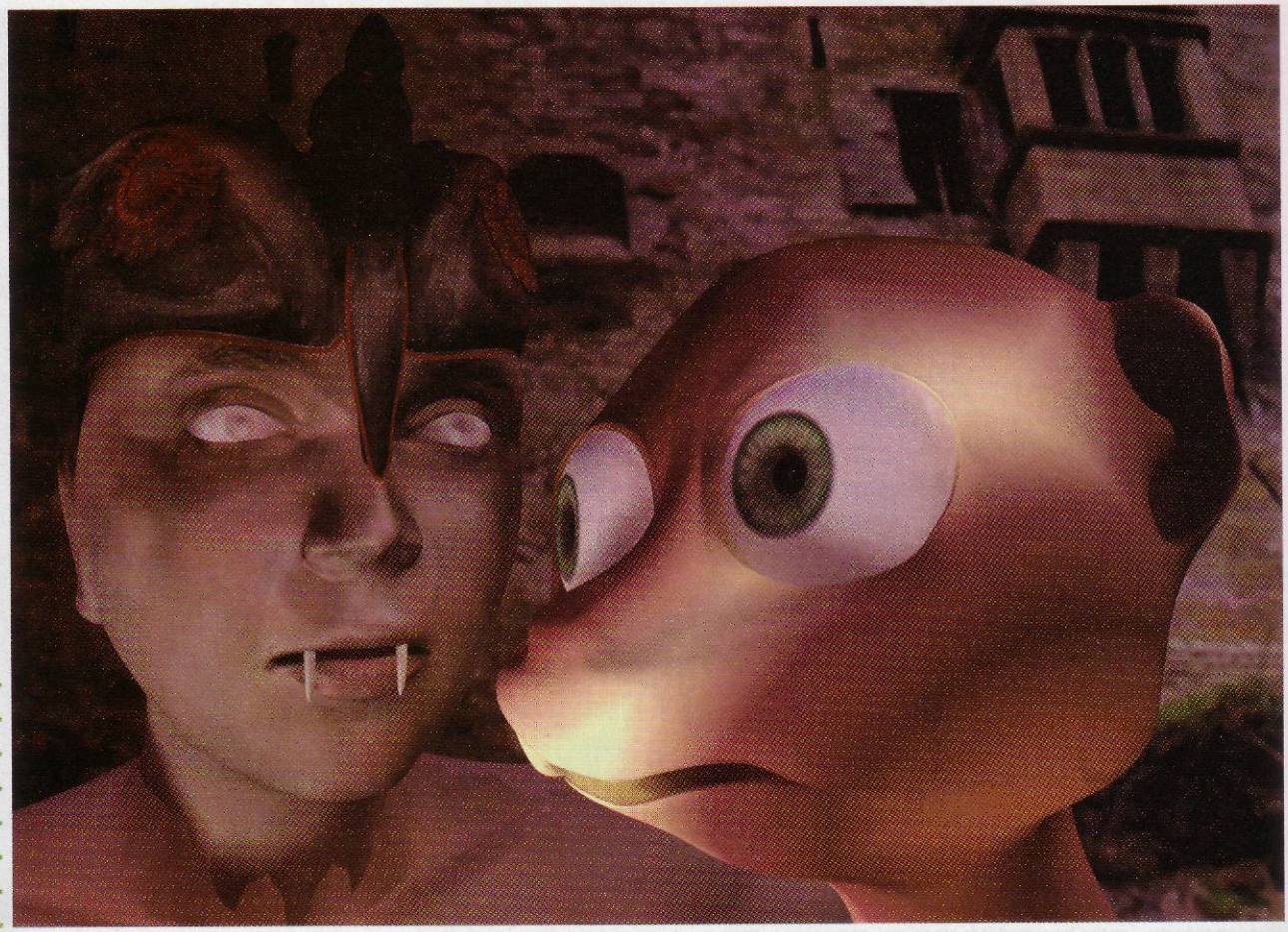
A few of the major regions of Arcadia are described below. However, this is only a sample; any arcade game you've ever played could be found in Arcadia, and you should feel free to drop the party into one of your personal favorites.

The Arena

The Arena is a network of connected realms—the fighting pits of martial arts games separated by the labyrinthine halls of the shooting games. The arena is an excellent place to acquire offensive subroutines, but it is a deadly region where blood, blades, and bullets are the only currency held in high regard. The Arena is the base of operations for both Datafist and the Pixel Platoon, and these cabals are engaged in endless bloody feuds, broken up by battles with the deadly MOBs that inhabit the realms.

The Castle

The Castle is a massive tower that extends for hundreds of levels. It is filled with ladders and floating platforms, and anyone who wishes to travel up will need to do a lot of climbing and jumping. No organic has ever reached the top of the Castle, and there are dozens of stories about what waits at the top. Some people say that a beautiful princess has been trapped by a giant gorilla. Other tales tell of a fabulous hoard of power-ups and subroutines, while a few claim that the uppermost levels have actually been claimed by the Corruptor viruses. If there's a node at the top of the tower, the party may have to find out the truth behind the legends!



The Catacombs

This underground maze is home to a variety of classic arcade games, like *Snack-Man* and *Miss Snack-Man*. Power-ups appear in the Catacombs, often moving about under their own power. Moving deeper into the maze, one encounters the dungeon levels of *Cestus*, where monster generators spawn endless hordes of ravening MOBs. Many treasures are hidden in the Catacombs, but the unrelenting swarms of monsters can quickly overpower unprepared gamers.

MUDVILLE

MUDville is the home of chat rooms, roleplaying games, and simulations. While certain realms vary, for the most part the environments in MUDville are extremely realistic. Travelers must eat or they starve. They must rest or they become fatigued. Traveling across a desert or arctic tundra require Survival checks to avoid the deadly effects of the environment.

The inhabitants of MUDville are quite civilized in comparison to the people of Arcadia. While monsters haunt the wilds and the dungeons, there are a number of major cities scattered throughout the realms. Most of the realms have some sort of currency, such as gold pieces. Power-ups and subroutines are extremely expensive, if they are available at all, but gold can buy shelter and food.

The Chat Realms

The network of chat rooms are quite different from the rest of MUDville. Most of the realms are made up of grids of large gray rooms; elaborate descriptions of colorful locations are written on the walls of these otherwise empty rooms. People who spend an extensive amount of time in these chat rooms find that they begin to see the descriptions instead of the actual rooms, imagining the fantastic environments instead of seeing the plain words.

Many of the chat realms have no combat code; guns will not fire, and martial artists find that they simply can't hit anything. Even aggressive coding effects completely fail in these areas. These realms are generally inhabited by Avatars who are content to sit and talk for days on end, discussing TV shows, movies, and other elements of the real world.

These Avatars often speak a pidgin variant of 13375p34|<, communicated entirely in acronyms: "GAL, GF," "LOL." Most of these chatters have no interest in events that occur beyond their sheltered world; while the safety of the chatroom may seem appealing, the endless discussions of trivial matters will usually force the PCs to leave quickly or risk madness.

ForeverQuest

ForeverQuest is a massive fantasy roleplaying game. It spans hundreds of realms: dungeons, haunted forests, dwarven citadels, deadly deserts, and far more. If you've ever seen it in *Dungeons & Dragons*, you can probably find it in one of the *ForeverQuest* realms. In addition to the adventuring areas, there are realms that are entirely dedicated to commerce; players spend their lives as farmers, miners, or blacksmiths, producing simple subroutines from the materials of the land. Most adventurers will find this to be a mind-bogglingly dull existence, but it does provide a source for basic subroutines and weak power-ups.

The MOBs of *ForeverQuest* can be found in the form of any fantasy creature. Some are relatively mindless, like the giant rats or goblin hordes that exist to give starting characters something to destroy. But the powerful MOBs can be quite dangerous. The dragon Redfang—one of the leaders of the Mob—lives in a cavernous lair in the depths of *ForeverQuest*, surrounded by all manner of treasures.

Twilight Crusade

Twilight Crusade is a modern-day RPG set in a gloomy gothic world filled with tragic vampires, tormented ghosts, and deadly treehugging werewolves. It was designed to be a world of conspiracies, and since the Surge it has become a stronghold of the Mob. Most of the organic gamers have been killed or have fled to Hub City or other realms; now the elder vampires are studying the ContiNet and developing schemes to extend their sinister grip. Travelers often underestimate the dangers of the realm. On the surface it doesn't appear to be as dangerous as the dungeons of *ForeverQuest*, but appearances can be deceiving; the masterminds of the realm are extremely cunning and can manipulate PCs into serving their nefarious goals.

While most of the inhabitants of *Twilight Crusade* appear to be human, lycanthropes and vampires are scattered throughout the populace. Ghosts, zombies, mummies, and ghouls lurk in the shadows and sewers, but the vampire lords usually keep these monsters hidden until their power is needed.

Other Realms

ForeverQuest and *Twilight Crusade* are two of the largest games, but there are dozens of other games on the server. *Metropolis* is a superhero RPG. *Lost Continents* is a game of pulp adventure. And *Universes of Stellar Conquest* is a science fiction adventure filled with evil empires and bold galactic knights. Then there are the Sim Realms, which include cities that are constantly shifting and being rebuilt and battlefields where tactical combats are fought over and over. Even if adventurers never visit these realms, the inhabitants of these games may find their way out to Hub City.

THE REDLANDS

The final server is known as the Redlands. Few of the organics actually know the origin of its name, which is derived from "R&D." The Redlands is the development server, where the Psykey engineers would develop and test new ideas. As a result, the different realms of the Redlands vary tremendously in tone and realism. A few are half-finished variations of games found in Arcadia or MUDville. Adventurers who wander into these realms may believe that they are in one of the other servers, until they start running into crash bugs, feature creeps, and other errors. But the more unique realms of the Redlands lie beyond the development levels; these are the realms where the bare code of the net lies revealed.

The Data Maze

The Data Maze is a vast labyrinth filled with the building blocks used to create the rest of the ContiNet. The Maze is the place that adventurers are most likely to encounter programs, from data monkeys to daemons; this is their natural habitat. Security systems are also extremely common, and any group that plans to spend much time in the Data Maze had better include a good hacker. Despite the many dangers, the Data Maze holds many powerful subroutines and a tremendous array of data packets, not to mention a number of nodes.

The Data Maze is the home of the Killer Apps, who take great pleasure in hunting down organics who cross their paths. It is also one of the strongholds of the Hacker 1337, who take pride in their ability to overcome the security systems and to evade the Killer Apps.

The Mail Server

Despite its name, the Mail Server is not actually an entire server; it is simply the realm that contains the email of the Psykey employees. As a result, anyone traveling through the barren hallways of the server has to deal with an almost constant barrage of spam. The Mail Server is also the central hive of the Corruptors, the deadly viruses who intend to spread across the entire net. Despite its dangers, the Mail Server contains gateways to a number of key areas within the Data Maze; it is often safer to fight the spam than to risk the security systems of the maze.

The Outer Darkness

The Outer Darkness is a thing of myth and legend. It is said that in the Mail Server there is a gateway filled with absolute darkness. The story is that this is a portal to the outside Internet—and that anyone who passes through will be wisked away and lost in an ocean of pornography, e-commerce sites, and spam. Of course, there's only one way to find out...

POWER GROUPS

The instant the ContiNet was cut off from the world, factions and cabals began sprouting up like weeds. Some are bands of human gamers seeking strength in numbers. Others are programs or viruses that have gained a disturbing amount of autonomy since the collapse of the system. A few of the more powerful cabals are described below. It is possible that one of these groups was responsible for the Surge and the collapse of the system—but which one? The Hacker 1337 could have accidentally caused the disaster, while the Corruptors could have seized the net to serve as a private breeding ground. The Killer Apps or the Mob could have gotten organized *before* the Surge instead of after. Or Themis herself could have engineered the Surge as part of some grand scheme. As Gamemaster, you will have to decide which of these groups you want to play a major role in your campaign—and which one was actually responsible for the fall of the ContiNet.

THEMIS

The Surge disabled all of the primary support systems of the ContiNet. Themis claims to be the embodiment of a secondary support system who is now seeking to restore order to the Net and find a way to return the trapped organics to their bodies. It's up to you to decide whether she is telling the truth, or whether she has a more sinister motive.

Themis does not have a physical form like the other programs and MOBs of the ContiNet. For all intents and purposes, her Hub City temple is her body. Her ability to affect the Net is limited, which is why she must work through the players. Her greatest strength is her power of divination. She possesses a +30 modifier on Data Analysis checks and can use any of the related coding abilities presented in Chapter 2 without having to spend computing cycles. She also can use any divination spell (whether arcane or divine) presented in *d20 Modern* as if she was a 20th-level Acolyte. In addition, she has a general awareness of events throughout the system that exceeds any of these spells; it is up to you to decide exactly how much she knows, but she can certainly obtain whatever information you need to get an adventure started. Finally, Themis has a limited ability to *teleport* her agents. She can generally *teleport* the party to the network portal that leads them to the realm where the next adventure is to take place. She can occasionally *teleport* PCs in other servers back to her temple, but this clearly puts a strain on her systems.

If the party begins to connect Themis to other nodes, her powers grow. The full extent of these powers is up to you. Initially this might simply be reflected by an increase in her powers of divination and teleportation. But in the long run, she could gain a greater ability to twist reality within the ContiNet.

Themis' primary enemies are the other systems of the ContiNet—The Killer Apps, the Mob, and the Corruptors. The PCs are her only allies; she has chosen them to act as her sword.

THE CORRUPTORS

The Corruptors are an alliance of sentient viruses. Their stronghold is in the Mail Server of the Redlands, but now that the Surge has disabled most of the defenses of the Net, they have begun to spread their infection into other realms. Their motives are mysterious and difficult for organic minds to fathom. They may simply corrupt and destroy because it is their nature, but some programmers believe that they are attempting to evolve into some sort of more advanced virtual lifeform—and that the ContiNet is the perfect cradle for this experiment.

The Corruptors have found organic allies among the Hacker 1337; some of these rogue programmers are only too happy to make deals with these software devils. Their greatest enemies are Themis and the Killer Apps. Themis wishes to restore order to the system, while the Apps fear the Corruptors' power to infect and destroy their systems.

While the Corruptors include hundreds of viruses, most of these are simply duplicates of the core inner circle. The three masterminds behind the cabal are known as Emperor, Michelangelo, and Melissa.

DATAFIST

Datafist is a league of fighting game fanatics—martial artists, wrestlers, and ninjas. Following the Surge, they banded together, both in the interests of mutual defense and to hone their combat skills. They are typically found in Arcadia; they spend most of their time fighting the Pixel Platoon for control of the precious save points scattered throughout the Arena. When there are interludes in the feud with the shooters, they tend to fight one another it elaborate tournaments.

Rank within Datafist is determined by combat. The current leaders are Lady Blood (female ninja, 7th-level Wargame/3rd-level Twitch), who relies on her devastating speed and agility, and Grond (male bruiser, 7th-level Wargame/1st-level Twitch), a massive giant formed from solid stone.

THE HACKER 1337

The Hacker 1337 (that's "leet," or el-ite) are a loose coalition of destructive hackers. As a group they are mainly interested in causing further disruptions in the Net; they take pride in causing widespread and colorful chaos. Player hackers could apply for membership, but unless the PC has performed some impressive and foolhardy acts of vandalism or destruction, he won't be considered. The 1337 have a vague alliance with the Corruptors, as they approve of the chaos caused by the viruses. Their primary enemies in the Net are the Killer Apps, who view the destruction of the 1337 as the ultimate proof of the superiority of software over wetware.

While the Hacker 1337 are chaotic as a group, individual hackers can be reasoned with and may potentially help the party—although such help may have strings (or viruses) attached. Hackers often hang out at the Sargasso Café in Hub City; adventurers seeking programming assistance may want to vist the café.

The current leaders among the 1337—to the degree that they recognize leaders—are two talented programmers: Hunter (male hacker, 8th-level Programmer) and Random (female hacker, 7th-level Programmer/3rd-level Avatar).

THE KILLER APPS

One of the 3 basic science fiction plots is "artificial intelligence becomes homicidal and attempts to destroy humanity." Why argue with tradition? The Killer Apps are an alliance of sentient daemons who seek to destroy the organics and seize control of the ContiNet. They are based in the Data Maze of the Redlands, but they are slowly converting more and more programs to their cause. The greatest enemies of the Apps are Themis, the Corruptors, and the Hacker 1337; Themis because she seeks to restore the system to its original condition, and the Corruptors and the 1337 because of the danger they pose to all of the programs of the Net.

The Killer Apps are extremely arrogant. They view all organics as weak, stupid, and flawed, and it is this overconfidence that may allow the party to survive an encounter with a powerful daemon. Like Themis, the Apps are seeking to seize control of the network of nodes scattered across the ContiNet—although once Themis manages to gain control of a node, the Apps don't have the power to take it away from her.

THE MOB

A "MOB" is a Mobile Object—a game character capable of moving about and interacting with players. *The* Mob is a tightly organized cabal of game villains; following the Surge, these characters gained a greater degree of autonomy and self-awareness. Like the Killer Apps, they seek to expand their power across the Net, and they have just begun to learn about the power of the hidden nodes.

While only a few MOBs possess the raw power of the daemon lords of the Killer Apps, the Mob has a far greater understanding of human nature. As a result, the Mob has been able to manipulate organics into working for them, knowingly or as dupes. The members of the Mob also have an easier time hiding among humans; a werewolf from *Twilight Crusade* can be far more subtle than a daemon or a virus.

The Mob is based in MUDville. Its greatest stronghold is in the *Twilight Crusade* realm, masterminded by an elder vampire known as the Queen of Shadows (Female spokesmodel vampire, 6th-level Avatar/6th-level Wargame/6th-level Programmer), but it also has cells scattered throughout the other MUDville realms and Hub City. While the Queen of Shadows is the most cunning member of the Mob, the most powerful member of the inner circle is the dragon Redfang, who is waiting for the right time to leave his lair and rain down fire and death on the people of Hub City.

THE PIHEL PLATOON

The Pixel Platoon is an alliance of diehard shooters—an army of kids who cut their teeth on *Counterstrike* and *Doom*, along with a handful of actual soldiers from special forces and ranger battalions who trained using advanced computer simulations. Following the Surge, these warriors quickly realized that they were stronger together than apart; under the leadership of General Devastation (male marksman, 10th-level Wargame) they have become a tightly organized unit. Operating out of the Arena in Arcadia, they have spend a great deal of time feuding with the martial artists of Datafist, fighting over the few save points scattered around the realms. But they have also begun to explore other servers in search of new challenges. This has brought them into conflict with the Corruptors and the leaders of the Mob; these virtual foes may prove to be far more deadly than any creature of flesh and blood.

The members of the Platoon are extremely arrogant and tend to look down on "civilians." However, with the right combination of flattery and diplomacy, it is possible that the party could convince a group of Pixel soldiers to assist them with a mission.

THE INHABITANTS OF THE NET

The ContiNet is filled with a vast assortment of unusual and deadly creatures. Most of them fall into one of five categories: Error, MOB, Organic, Program, or Virus.

Errors are the gremlins of the net—electronic spirits that cause systems to fail and things to go wrong. An error may have once been a healthy program that was corrupted by a virus or another error, or it may have emerged fully formed during the Surge or some lesser disaster.

Errors possess darkvision with a range of 60 feet. They are immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, and stunning.

Sample Errors: The classic error is the **crash bug**. Use the statistics of monstrous spider. Its "poison" is actually a crash condition; the initial damage is the same as normal, but the secondary damage is paralysis. This paralysis can only be removed by transporting the victim to a save point or by using *restore crashed system*. As with all things, size is relative in the ContiNet, and simply indicates the power of the error. Use a Small or Medium monstrous spider for a typical bug. The colossal spider is the dreaded Blue Screen of Death, which is said to prowl the Data Maze in the Redlands.

MOB is short for Mobile Object. In a game, any sort of AI opponent is a MOB. As a result, a MOB typically has the shape and ability of some other creature—either a human or some sort of monster. Any of the creatures presented in *d20 Modern* can be used as MOBs; *ForeverQuest* is filled with goblins and ogres, while *Twilight Crusade* is a world of vampires and werewolves. MOBs are usually bound to follow certain forms of behavior, sticking to the script of the game to which they are attached. However, the Surge disrupted the systems that held the MOBs in check, and now they have broken free of their old restrictions.

MOBs possess all of the abilities and weaknesses of the creatures that they are designed to imitate.

Sample MOBS: MOBs come in all shapes and sizes, from rats to kobolds to warbots. One critical feature of a MOB is that they are designed to perfectly replicate the creatures that they appear to be. A crash bug may have the statistics of a spider, but it is formed from light and code. A MOB monstrous spider looks just like a spider you'd find on Earth – assuming that you can actually find a monstrous spider on Earth.

Organics are humans who were trapped in the Net when the Surge occurred. This category includes the player characters. Like the player characters, other organics are trapped in whatever game shells they were using when the Surge occurred, and if they die in the Net their minds will be destroyed. Some organics seek to escape from the Net, and these people may help the player characters. However, the crash has affected the sanity of many of the organics who were connected to the Net, and many—like the members of Datafist and the Pixel Platoon—have become lost in the fantasy lives of their game characters.

Sample Organics: Organics use the same character generation system as player characters, and will possess levels in one or more of the four core classes.

Programs are the systems that maintain the ContiNet. Some programs have very minor powers, while others—the so-called Daemon Lords—can twist the reality of the Net to suit their whims. Like the MOBs, programs were originally locked into specific tasks and presented no harm to the organic users of the net. But following the Surge, a number of programs have become sentient and develop their own goals. The most dangerous of these have joined together to form the cabal known as the Killer Apps.

Programs possess darkvision with a range of 60 feet. They are immune to poison.

Sample Programs: A weak program—a data monkey or gopher—might have the statistics of a kobold or goblin, possibly enhanced by a few programmer levels. Powerful daemons can rival the power of *d20 Modern* fiends. Use the fiend generation system, replacing supernatural abilities with hardcoded coding abilities whenever possible. If a daemon possesses damage reduction that normally requires a magical weapon, any advanced offensive subroutine will bypass the defense.

Viruses are similar to programs, but they are inherently chaotic and dangerous. Viruses are designed to spread throughout computer systems, corrupting and destroying the other programs that they encounter.

Viruses possess darkvision with a range of 60 feet. They are immune to poison.

Sample Viruses: Viruses are examined in more detail in the final section of *Deathnet*.

In place of supernatural and spell-like abilities, creatures in *Deathnet* possess Hardcoded (HC) abilities. If a Hardcoded ability requires an action at all, it does not provoke an attack of opportunity. However, Hardcoded abilities are affected by *disrupt coding*, *sphere of stability*, and *study dataflow*. *Sphere of stability* only affects powers specifically defined as coding abilities, but *disrupt coding* can be used to temporarily negate any Hardcoded ability.

MOBs may possess supernatural and spell-like abilities. These cannot be affected by *disrupt coding*, but can be targeted by the *dispel magic* ability of an Avatar using a wizard persona.

A FIELD GUIDE TO VIRUSES

Anyone who ventures into the Redlands will develop a healthy respect for the threat posed by viruses. Designed to sow chaos, viruses are deadly opponents feared by organic and program alike.

While there are dozens of variations, there are four primary types of virus: corruptors, infectors, macro viruses, and worms. Despite its name, the cabal known as the Corruptors is made up of all four types of virus, although two of its most influential members (Emperor and Michelangelo) are corruptor viruses.

Viruses have the following statistics.

Hit Die: d12.

Base Attack Bonus: 3/4 of total Hit Dice.

Good Saving Throws: Fortitude and Will.

Skills: 4 + Int Modifier, quadruple for first Hit Die.

Feats: 1, plus 1 feat for every 3 Hit Dice beyond 1 HD.

Virus Traits

Most viruses possess the following traits:

Coding Resistance (Ex): Viruses are designed to resist coding effects. A programmer must make a successful level check (1d20 + programmer level) to use any coding ability against the virus; the Difficulty Class of the check varies by type of virus. Even if the check is successful, a virus still receives a saving throw against the coding effect.

Damage Reduction (Ex): Viruses are tenacious creatures, and most can shrug off a certain amount of damage.

Darkvision (Ex): All viruses possess darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Immunities (Ex): All viruses are immune to poison.

VIRUS, CORRUPTOR

The corruptor is the most intelligent and malevolent of all of the viruses. A corruptor virus can disrupt the datastream of an opponent, damaging or seizing control of his systems and ultimately transforming him into a new corruptor.

Species Traits

Long-Term Corruption (HC): A corruptor virus can use *corrupt system* at will (Saving Throw DC 20). If a victim is killed while suffering from this effect, he is permanently destroyed—no extra lives allowed! After 3d6 rounds have passed, a new corruptor virus arises from the space in which he was killed (a duplicate of the virus that destroyed him). The saving

throw for this ability is Charisma based, and it does not require any expenditure of computing cycles.

System Override (HC): A corruptor virus can attempt to seize control of anyone who has been affected by its long-term corruption attack. This takes a standard action, has a maximum range of 50 feet, and requires a clear line of sight between the virus and its intended victim. The target gets to make a Will Saving Throw (DC 20); if he fails, he suffers the effects of *charm person*. The saving throw is Charisma based.

The most common corruptor virus is known as Emperor. A dark digital mockery of the emperor image from the tarot, Emperor is a sinister mastermind who is determined to devour the ContiNet. In battle Emperor wields a scepter and orb formed of dark lines of shimmering code.

After destroying its opponents, Emperor often recites the following poem:

I will grind my hatred upon the loved ones.
Despair will be brought upon the hoping childs of happiness.
Wherever there is joy the hordes of the eclipse will pollute
sadness and hate under the reign of fear.
In the name of the almighty Emperor....

Emperor: CR 11 Virus; HD 10d12+30; hp 95; Init +7; Spd 45 ft.; Defense 22, touch 17, flat-footed 19 (+3 Dex, +4 Natural, +5 Deflection); BAB +7; Grap +9; Atk +9 melee (2d6+2 bludgeoning + viral infection, scepter) or +10 ranged (1d10 cold + viral infection, orb blast); Full Atk +9 melee (2d6+2 bludgeoning + viral infection, scepter) or +10 ranged (1d10 acid + viral infection, orb blast); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Long-term corruption, system override, viral infection; SQ Coding resistance 20, damage reduction 5/–; AL Chaos, evil; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +13; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 20; AP 3; CC 20.

Skills/Feats: Craft (writing) +10, Data Analysis +7, Diplomacy +13, Disable Device +12, Hide +10, Intimidate +13, Jump +10, Knowledge (the Redlands) +12, Listen +12, Move Silently +10, Search +12, Spot +12; Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Watchdog.

Advancement: 11–20 HD.

Viral Infection (HC): Whenever Emperor makes a successful ranged or melee attack, its target loses 4 computing cycles and takes 2 points of temporary Constitution damage. If the victim's Constitution is reduced below zero, he is killed.

Each time Emperor uses viral infection, it can recover 4 hit points or 4 computing cycles.

Coding Abilities: At will–*analyze program, bypass security, study dataflow;* 5 cycles–*systems freeze* (DC 17); 10 cycles–*lesser override* (DC 18), *disrupt coding;* 15 cycles–*ride datastream.* Caster level 10th. The saves are Charisma based.

VIRUS, INFECTOR

Infector viruses are wraithlike creatures that disrupt and crash other programs. Cunning and vicious, infectors have a passion for chaos. Infectors are largely driven by programmed instinct, and are often found in the service of corruptors, macro viruses, or hackers.

Species Traits

Incorporeal (HC): An infector virus has no coherent physical form. It can only be harmed by other incorporeal creatures or by creatures using advanced offensive subroutines, coding effects, or hardcoded abilities. It is immune to all other attack forms. Even when hit by a coding effect or advanced offensive subroutine, it has a 50% chance to ignore any damage.

An incorporeal creature can enter or pass through solid objects, but must remain adjacent to the object's exterior, and thus cannot pass through an object whose space is larger than its own. An incorporeal creature cannot pass through a force effect.

An incorporeal creature's attacks ignore natural armor, armor, and shields. Incorporeal creatures cannot make trip or grapple attacks, nor can they be tripped or grappled. An incorporeal creature cannot take any action that would move or manipulate a physical object.

An incorporeal creature moves silently, and cannot be heard unless it wishes to be. It has no Strength score, and its Dexterity modifier applies to

both its ranged and melee attacks. Nonvisual senses, such as scent and blindsight, are either ineffective or only partially effective with regard to incorporeal creatures.

The Equalizer power-up temporarily allows a character to attack incorporeal creatures. In addition, as this is a hardcoded ability it can be temporarily negated by the *disrupt coding* effect.

There are a wide variety of infector viruses, each with a unique form of attack. Cascade is one of the more common infectors. It takes the form of a ghostly figure shrouded in a cloak formed out of falling numbers and letters.

Cascade: CR 4 Virus; HD 4d12+4; hp 30; Init +3; Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); Defense 14, touch 14, flat-footed 11 (+3 Dex, +1 Deflection); BAB +3; Grap –; Atk +6 melee (1d4 acid + cascade effect, disrupting touch); Full Atk +7 melee (1d4 acid + cascade effect, disrupting touch); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Cascade effect; SQ Coding resistance 15; AL Chaos; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +5; Str –, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8; AP 0; CC 0.

Skills/Feats: Hide +8, Listen +5, Spot +6; Agile Riposte, Dodge.

Advancement: 5–8 HD.

Cascade Effect (HC): When Cascade strikes an opponent, its target must make a Fortitude save (DC 13). Failure causes the victim to suffer 1 point of temporary Charisma damage. Each round thereafter, the victim loses 1 computing cycle—and if she runs out of computing cycles, she loses 1 hit point each round. This is a crash condition, and it can be removed with *restore crashed system*. The Difficulty Class of the saving throw is based on Constitution.

A victim of the cascade effect seems to slowly melt. Streams of data start running off of her body, and letters and numbers pool around her feet. The crash has one more unusual effect: the victim cannot make any sort of sound. If she tries to speak, her words will materialize for a moment above her head, then dissolve and fall toward the floor. If someone is paying attention, they can make a Spot check (DC 10) to read the message before it falls apart.

If a creature is killed by the cascade effect, there is a 50% chance that a new Cascade materializes 2d4 rounds after her death. This does not prevent the victim from using an extra life or otherwise cheating death.

If someone already suffering from the cascade effect is struck again and fails her saving throw, she suffers an additional point of Charisma damage. However, she does not lose hit points or computing cycles at a faster rate.

VIRUS, MACRO

A macro virus is the link between the corruptor and the worm. It is capable of reproducing rapidly, but intelligent enough to choose the right time and place to strike. A macro virus can also compel its victim to perform actions on its behalf, though its hold is not as strong as that of the corruptor.

While it enjoys spreading chaos, the typical macro is not as malevolent as a corruptor virus. As a result, macro viruses usually serve as the ambassadors between the organics and the Corruptors.

While other strains are more common in Redlands data mazes, the Melissa virus enjoys interacting with organics and may seek out adventurers. Melissa is always looking for intellectual challenges; it loves playing games, and it is fond of debates and arguments. Of course, it holds human life in low regard and it always plays to win; PCs should be careful not to be lulled by Melissa's friendly demeanor.

The Melissa virus appears as a stylized human female formed of digital light. It carries a handful of Scrabble tiles, and toys with these while it talks. In battle, it flings the razor-sharp tiles at its enemies. When it defeats a foe, it is fond of saying "Twenty-two points, plus triple-word-score, plus fifty points for using all my letters. Game's over. I'm outta here!"

Melissa: CR 8 Virus; HD 7d12+14; hp 59; Init +7; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 19, touch 16, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +3 Natural, +3 Deflection); BAB +6; Grap +8; Atk +9 ranged or melee (1d8 + viral infection, Scrabble blast); Full Atk +9 ranged or melee (1d8 + viral infection, Scrabble blast); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Activate macro, Scrabble blast, viral infection; SQ Coding resistance 18, damage reduction 3/–, duplication; AL Chaos; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 16; AP 2; CC 12.

Skills/Feats: Bluff +10, Data Analysis +5, Diplomacy +10, Disable Device +10, Knowledge (the Redlands) +10, Gamble +10, Listen +10, Search +8, Sense Motive +10, Sleight of Hand +10, Spot +10; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes.

Advancement: 8–15 HD.

Viral Infection (HC): Whenever Melissa makes a successful ranged or melee attack, its target loses 3 computing cycles and takes 1 point of temporary Wisdom damage. If the victim's Wisdom is reduced below zero, he is killed.

Each time Melissa uses viral infection, it can recover 3 hit points or 3 computing cycles. If it possesses its full allotment of computing cycles, it can choose to gain 3 temporary computing cycles; if these are not used, they fade away after 10 minutes have passed.

Activate Macro (HC): People who lose Wisdom due to Melissa's viral infection attack become vulnerable to manipulation. Once per round, Melissa may select a single target and issue a single-word order as a free action This has the same effects as the divine spell *command*. The target can resist with a Will saving throw (DC 16).

Once a victim recovers all of the Wisdom damage he has suffered at the hands of this particular Melissa, he is no longer vulnerable to this attack.

Duplication (HC): As a full action, Melissa can spend 30 computing cycles to attempt to generate a duplicate of itself; this has a 50% chance of success. If the duplication is successful, the new Melissa possesses half of the hit points and computing cycles of its creator (after the costs of duplication have been taken into account).

Scrabble Blast (HC): Melissa attacks by flinging glowing Scrabble tiles at its target. Melissa may adjust the type of damage (bludgeoning, slashing, cold, etc.) she inflicts as a free action. When it throws the tiles they will come together to spell a word relating to the type of damage they will inflict, such as "razor," "blaze," or "frappe." By spending 10 computing cycles, Melissa can transform its attack into a small explosion; this inflicts 2d6 points of damage on everyone within a 10-foot area, and transmits the viral infection.

Coding Abilities: At will—*analyze program*, *bypass security*, *study dataflow*; 5 cycles—*decrypt thoughts* (DC 15); 10 cycles—*babelfish*, *false sensory input* (DC 16), *ride datastream*; 15 cycles—*FUBAR* (DC17). Caster level 7th. The saves are Charisma based.

VIRUS, WORM

Worms are the most common form of virus. A worm is driven solely by hardcoded instinct, and spends its life in an endless quest to reproduce as quickly as possible. However, worms will follow the instructions of macro viruses or corruptor viruses, and hackers may be able to seize control of a clutch of worms. The Corruptors have actually played a significant role in holding the worms in check. The more powerful viruses have plans for the resources of the ContiNet, and they do not wish to see the servers devoured by worms... yet.

Species Traits

Duplication (HC): As a full action, a worm can spend 10 computing cycles to generate a duplicate of itself. The duplicate possesses half of the hit points and computing cycles of its creator (after the costs of duplication have been taken into account).

The SoBig virus is an example of a typical worm. It takes the shape of an enormous serpent formed from shimmering violet light, stretching twelve feet from tip to tail. It has a single violet eye and razor sharp proboscis, two feet in length. In battle it seeks to spear an opponent with its proboscis, sucking out vital cycles. Despite its imposing appearance, SoBig is actually a minor virus; its true strength is its ability to quickly reproduce.

SoBig: CR 2 Virus; HD 2d12+6; hp 19; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 16, touch 10, flat-footed 15 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +6 Natural); BAB +1; Grap +8; Atk +3 melee (1d6+3 piercing + viral infection, proboscis); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+3 piercing + viral infection, proboscis); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SA Viral infection; SQ Coding resistance 10, duplication, damage reduction 2/–, stacking; AL Chaos; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 6; AP 0; CC 5.

Skills/Feats: Climb +4, Spot +3, Swim +4; Enormous Size.

Advancement: 11–20 HD.

Viral Infection (HC): Whenever SoBig makes a successful attack, its target loses 2 computing cycles. If he does not have any computing cycles, he must make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) or suffer the effects of *systems freeze* for 2 rounds. The saving throw is Constitution based.

Each time SoBig uses viral infection, it can recover 2 hit points or 2 computing cycles. If it possesses its full allotment of computing cycles, it can choose to gain 2 temporary computing cycles; if these are not used, they fade away after 10 minutes have passed.

Stacking (Ex): Up to four SoBig viruses can occupy the same 10 ft. by 10 ft. space. Up to two of the viruses in a stack can target the same adjacent space with an attack.

SPAM

Most viruses are programs that have been specifically created to wreak havoc on other computer systems. Spam is the commercial equivalent of this; in its quest to claim your cash, it overloads you with a host of offers that are just too good to be true. FIND LOVE, FRIENDS, DATES! "Miracle Diet Bread–Recipe $20!" Find out ANYTHING about ANYONE! Refinance the Easy Way! Biggie-Size Your... well, you get the idea. Spam may not be designed with malicious intent (though this is debatable), but it can be just as dangerous as a true virus.

Spam takes the form of an anthropomorphic cube of pink mystery meat, typically 5 feet square. Its language is a garish audio collage, a constantly changing jumble of words and images advertising its various products. Its greatest strength is its tenacity; no matter how hard you try, spam keeps coming back.

Spam: CR 1 Virus; HD 1d12+7; hp 13; Init +0; Spd 25 ft.; Defense 16, touch 10, flat-footed 15 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +6 Natural); BAB +0; Grap +1; Atk +1 melee (1d4+1 acid + spam overload, engulf); Full Atk +1 melee (1d4+1 acid + spam overload, engulf); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft; SA Improved grab, spam overload; SQ Biggie size your spam, damage reduction 2/–, regeneration 2; AL Chaos; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 6; AP 0; CC 0.

Skills/Feats: Hide +4; Toughness.

Advancement: 2–20 HD.

Spam Overload (HC): Whenever spam makes a successful attack, its target must must make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) or be stunned and blinded for 1 round, as he is overwhelmed with images of the products and services the spam is promoting. If the spam has grappled with a victim, the victim must make the save every time that he suffers damage. This saving throw is Constitution based.

Regeneration (HC): Spam is eternal—no matter how hard you fight it, it always returns. Only two types of effects inflict lethal damage on spam: coding attacks, and ranged or melee attacks that use an action point (such as iron fist or deadly aim). You also inflict lethal damage if you are under the effect of the equalizer power-up. This regeneration can be temporarily cancelled by *disrupt coding*.

Improved Grab (HC): After spam inflicts damage with a melee attack, it may attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. No initial touch attack is required.

While grappling with an opponent, the spam inflicts normal damage and the system slowdown effect every time that it makes a successful grapple check.

Biggie Size Your Spam (HC): If you don't get rid of your spam, it can quickly grow out of control. Every time spam kills someone, it gains one computing cycle. Whenever its current computing cycles are equal to its current hit dice, reduce its computing cycles to zero and add 1d12 to its Hit Dice. Spam gains 1 point of Strength every time it gains a Hit Die, which increases its melee damage and ability to grapple. In addition, for every 3 Hit Dice that it gains, its rate of regeneration and its Damage Reduction increase by 1 point apiece. Finally, at 6 HD, spam gains the Enormous Size feat.

Immunities (Ex): In addition to the standard viral immunity to poison, spam is immune to mind-affecting effects, sleep, paralysis, and stunning.

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